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No. 43



N° 43

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

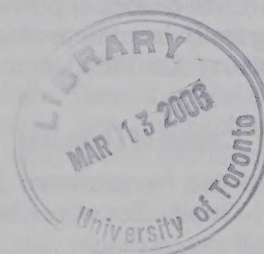
Deuxième session, 38^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 23 February 2006

Jeudi 23 février 2006



Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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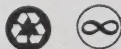
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 23 February 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 23 février 2006

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

NOWRUZ DAY ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR LE JOUR NOWRUZ

Mr. Racco moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 63, An Act to proclaim Nowruz Day / Projet de loi 63, Loi proclamant le Jour Nowruz.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Racco, pursuant to standing order 96, you have up to 10 minutes.

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): I'm very pleased to rise in the House today to speak about Bill 63, which is my private member's bill, An Act to proclaim Nowruz Day.

Before getting into the bill I would like to bring your attention to the members' gallery and welcome some special guests of mine, members of the Persian community. It's still early, so only a few of them are present, but there are more coming. Mrs. Mahnaz Shahbazi and Miss Samin Isaveghlou, welcome.

March 31 marks the first day of spring for Persians all over the world. It marks the first day of the new year, or Nowruz, meaning "new day." Nowruz is celebrated with family and friends and symbolizes hope of new beginnings.

Statistics Canada suggests that nearly 100,000 Persians live in Ontario; however, this may be a modest estimate. With so many Persians choosing to live in Ontario, it is only right that we honour their presence and contribution to the cultural mosaic of our province by proclaiming March 21 each year as Nowruz Day.

I would like to share with you a bit of history about the Persian community in our country and in our province of Ontario. Compared to other immigrant groups, Persians are relative newcomers to Canada. As late as the end of World War II, it is believed there were only about a dozen Persians living in Canada. The large influx of immigrants into Canada after World War II did not include any significant number of Persians. Many Persians came to Canada as part of a massive flow of students to North American universities that began after 1965. That was in the United States. Many would remain in Canada

after completing their studies and having obtained immigrant status. Following the Iranian revolution in 1979 and the overthrow of the monarchy, and throughout the Iran-Iraq war, the rate of immigration accelerated rapidly.

There are many reasons why people came to Canada: political, economic, educational, professional and religious reasons. New Canadians enjoy Canada's democratic and stable society, free of oppression and violence. Many Persians settled in the GTA, with a significant percentage of them settling in North York in the 1980s and 1990s. It is now believed that 56% of Persian Canadians reside in Toronto, mostly in the Willowdale riding of my colleague MPP Zimmer. Unlike other immigrant groups coming to Canada, there was no established Persian community to help the new immigrants settle into the new culture. These new Canadians quickly joined the professional ranks as medical doctors, engineers, lawyers, nurses and dentists. Many of them had to upgrade their qualifications to meet Canadian standards because they got their education back home. Those who came later chose entrepreneurship, focusing on the creation of construction companies—we have the largest high-density builders from that community—restaurants, bakeries, dry-cleaning shops, grocery stores, repair shops and computer stores.

The Persian business community has generously supported Persian identity in Canada through financial means and promotional Persian-language journals, magazines, radio and television programs. Advertising revenue bolsters the production and free distribution of many group publications and programs. The Persian community is extremely active in promoting their culture and Canadian culture. There is a great deal of community support available for new immigrants from Persia as well. They host many events and there are many organization websites, publications and community groups available to the Persian community.

According to the 1996 census, there were approximately 64,000 Persians living in Canada, or a 21% increase from 1991. The Persian community is a young one, both in terms of the length of time it has been established in Canada and the age of the members of this community. Only 7% of Persian Canadians are over the age of 60. The largest age group is between 25 and 39. What that means is that there is significant growth within that community today. The 2001 census estimates that 89,000 Persians live in Canada. Now it is estimated that nearly 100,000 Persians are living just in Ontario. The numbers seem not to balance, but that is because there are more members of the community than the statistics

seem to indicate. The exact number is difficult to determine, as data collected is determined by country of birth or language spoken. Therefore, the data do not reflect all members of the Persian Canadian community. Over the last decade, Persians have made up between 11% to 20% of the permanent residents from the Middle Eastern region. Ontario has the largest percentage of Persians, which is estimated to be 58%.

1010

Within the community, Persians are making significant contributions in the area of academia and science worlds. There is a significant number of Persian professors at most, if not all, of the Ivy League schools in North America. There is also a significant presence of scholars, professors, masters and Ph.D.s at York University, the University of Toronto and Ryerson. In fact, I am told that at Ryerson there are 26 Persian professors teaching. That's a huge number.

Probably one of Ontario's most well known members of the Persian community is Mr. Karim Hakim of Hakim Optical. In June 2005, Mr. Hakim was inducted as a Knight of the Sovereign Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Knights of Malta, right here at Queen's Park. Sir Karim Hakimi, as he is now known, was bestowed the honour of knighthood for his generosity and humanitarian efforts. His contribution includes donating hundreds of thousands of pairs of eyeglasses to people in need all over the world. He also has participated in the Ride for Sight for the Foundation Fighting Blindness. Sir Hakimi led Canada's largest motorcycle charity parade, in which more than 1,000 motorcyclists across the GTA raised money for vision research. The motorcycle parade is one aspect of Ride for Sight, which has collected more than \$12 million in donations for the Foundation Fighting Blindness, FFB, the only private organization dedicated to finding causes, treatments and cures for blindness. The director of the Foundation Fighting Blindness has said that Ride for Sight has raised more money than any other motorcycle charity ride in Canada.

I thank you for the time. I look forward to the support of all honourable members on Bill 63, An Act to proclaim Nowruz Day. Just before I conclude, let me say that we in this province, in Canada in fact, tend to recognize community members because we feel that Ontario and Canada are a country and a province made from many other nations from so many other parts of the world. I'm one good example. I was born and raised and educated in Italy, but I came here, and today I am in this honourable House. Like me, many other Ontarians and Canadians have had the good fortune of finding this province, this country, as welcoming as it is. We in public office should never forget how important it is to make all of us feel very comfortable where we are, because when we are happy, when we are comfortable, we can do even more than what we are doing.

I have a significant percentage of the Persian community in the riding of Thornhill, and as I said earlier, my friend MPP Zimmer also has quite a sizable percentage. The Persian community is all over the ridings, but those

two ridings have the highest number. This community has done so much, not only for themselves but for us, for Ontario, for Canada. By passing Bill 63, we are sending a strong message saying, "We are so pleased that you're part of Ontario, of Canada, and we want to celebrate your heritage, your first day," a celebration that they were born celebrating. Their parents, the people before them, celebrated for so many generations, and we in Ontario should, and I trust all of us will, support this bill, because it means saying thank you to them for choosing Ontario, for choosing Canada as a place to live, to grow, to work, to pay taxes and to be good citizens, because they are. They pay good taxes because they make good money. We should be happy for them that they do well, because when they do well, so do we.

Also, I can assure you that it is a community which respects and loves the laws of this province and this country. I can think of a number of occasions when I saw members of the community participating at functions, participating in the Chief LaBarge events, and in the community at large.

I say to them, thank you for choosing Ontario, thank you for choosing Canada, and I thank this honourable House for supporting the bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I'm pleased to support the bill introduced by the member from Thornhill. I want to say that I'll be sharing my time with my colleague from Beaches-East York, who will probably make more anthropological remarks than I will, except to say that this holiday is the most revered celebration in the greater Persian world, and we understand it has been celebrated for 3,000 years. So strong is the support for this celebration that when the theocratic government of Iran came to power in 1979, Nowruz was banned because the government wanted to recognize only Islamic holidays and considered Nowruz a pagan celebration. But we know that the people wouldn't have any of it. It's the most popular holiday in Iran, and most people continued to celebrate it anyway; thus, finally, the government of the day had to lift the ban. We know that this celebration is strongly rooted in their traditions and strongly revered, so we acknowledge and celebrate with them today this most revered holiday.

I also want to extend my acknowledgement to a friend of mine whose name is Mehdi Kouhestani, who is the national representative of the international department of the Canadian Labour Congress and also is the former Ontario CUPE council president. We have known each other for quite some time, and I wanted to, by way of friendship, extend my good thoughts on their celebrations of this holiday.

I want to add that, as much as the member from Thornhill would like to celebrate this tradition in a very cheerful, happy way, I know that many of the guests who are here today watching this announcement would like me to talk about something else, and that is the issue of access to trades and professions. We know that many of the people from Iran and the greater Persian world come

to this country well prepared academically, that they are very well educated, and when they come here, many of them are not able to get the kinds of jobs they are looking for. I know that Mr. Racco, as he is speaking to some of our guests, is probably telling them how hard he is working to make sure they are able to get the jobs they so desperately want to get. I'm sure that's the kind of communication that's going on while he is there saying hello.

The point is that we on this side of the House, including my colleague Tony Ruprecht, who is very big on this issue—I am sure that daily in the Liberal caucus, if not weekly at the caucus meetings, he is speaking—

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): Hourly.

Mr. Marchese: I'm not sure about hourly—is speaking to the obstacles that many people who come from the greater Persian world are looking at in the way of getting the jobs that they deserve. And Tony Ruprecht from Davenport is constantly fighting to remove the barriers faced by engineers, nurses, teachers, doctors—constantly. That is why he is going to stand up here today to celebrate the Liberal accomplishments in this field, with the help of New Democrats, of course, to push him along the way.

We know that we have the most educated taxi drivers in the world, who would love to be able to get jobs as engineers, doctors, nurses and teachers but are not able to. I am sure they want us to talk about that today. It isn't just a matter of celebrating their arrival to the country and that they should be working and paying taxes; it's a matter of making sure, when they come to this country with the greatest of hopes and expectations to be able to land a job, that they ought to get it. The member from Davenport knows full well that many of these people who come to this country are not getting it, because for years he has been fighting on their behalf, and he's going to speak to us about the successes he is having in this caucus to get rid of those barriers.

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While it is true that many who are doctors are getting a little more access to being able to practise—and dare I say that the reason they are getting some of those doctors' jobs is because the country and the province need them? If it didn't need them, the good regulatory body, which I've criticized from time to time and don't praise enough, would not have broken down some of those barriers to enable them to practise. We need them, therefore the regulatory body says, "Okay, we'll open the door a little bit."

But do you think the regulatory boards of engineering have done the same? Tony Ruprecht knows they haven't, and he is lobbying day in and day out to make sure it happens while he's in government. The Liberal government, my God, is so great and so good that the barriers are just coming down day in and day out. We have the most educated taxi drivers, from the Persian world, waiting for the Liberal government to pry those doors open, waiting and waiting as Tony Ruprecht and others in that caucus, Mario Racco included, are just fighting it

out in caucus every week, saying, "We've got to do more."

It's about celebrating Nowruz today, yes, but it's about breaking down barriers; it's about making sure that these communities make a little more money so they can pay a little more tax to the Ontario and Canadian governments. Mario Racco is speaking to this. He's going to have two or four minutes at the end of the day to talk about what the Liberal government is doing to make sure that these guests who are here today have better wages and better opportunities at jobs, so they can be better taxpayers here in Canada and Ontario. He'll speak to that in the next little while, I'm sure.

But my friend Mehdi Kouhestani, from the Canadian Labour Congress, released a study that reported that Canadian-born visible minorities faced the highest barriers to steady, well-paying jobs of any group in the country. This barrier is expected to worsen, not get better. Canadian-born Arabs, Persians and west Asians experience a 14% unemployment rate. Canadian-born South Asians experience a 9.6% unemployment rate.

So what do I say to Mario Racco, the member from Thornhill, and others who might be speaking to this? We celebrate Nowruz today, but we would celebrate it more and with greater satisfaction if we knew that we were getting rid of the barriers to their employment and if we knew that they were getting well-paying jobs so they could be happy Canadians.

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): It is indeed a pleasure for me to stand today in support of Bill 63, An Act to proclaim Nowruz Day. I certainly commend the member from Thornhill for bringing this forward. I trust that some people would come to the conclusion that, being a member from eastern Ontario, what am I up on my feet for? I have had a long association with history and heritage in my riding—I'm still associated with three historical societies—and with that and my work in education, I have always been very happy and excited about promoting not only the old heritages that we had in eastern Ontario but the new heritages that we celebrate in our community.

Eastern Ontario has had a long history of immigration, back to the Scottish, Irish, German, the Loyalist history, joining with the Mohawks who had settlements on the St. Lawrence River in my area and the Mohawk community of Akwesasne, where we still have great celebrations. This summer, I'm going to be attending their powwow. These are the things that we celebrate in eastern Ontario.

But as our province has evolved over the past couple of hundred years, we have in recent years welcomed many new and very diverse populations to our community, people of Chinese, Irish, Polish and Pakistani descent.

It was just last Saturday that my wife and I were in the community celebrating with the Italian Canadian sports club, a great celebration where they had a dinner and dance. It was just another opportunity to celebrate with those who, from around the globe, come to our community and bring their cultures. They bring unique

traditions with them, they enhance our cultural fibre and they have made our province what it is.

In my area too, the Cornwall and District Immigrant Services Agency has worked very hard to welcome our new Canadians; even those of Persian descent we welcome. In my community too, I look at the Quilt of Belonging. The Persian culture and history was recognized on the Quilt of Belonging, a brainchild of Esther Bryan. That quilt is touring in northern Canada; it is now at Rankin Inlet. I'm happy to say that three constituents from my riding, John and Susan Towndrow and their son Lee, are touring with that quilt and bringing many, many cultures to citizens across this country.

The member from Thornhill's bill will have the same effect that we have with that quilt, with the heritage I celebrate in eastern Ontario, because it will recognize the distinct contribution of Persian Canadians to our province. They have a great culture and they wish to respect and celebrate their traditions here in our province. I laud that. I lauded that for 32 and a half years in my classroom with the students I taught, and I continue to do that as I work for my constituents back home, bringing these celebrations into the community.

Nowruz, the Persian new year, is a festival that traces its origin back over 3,000 years to one of the world's oldest religions, Zoroastrianism. We have a community wanting to celebrate that new year because it really is a time when they celebrate cleansing. It is a time where they celebrate with the spring cleaning of home and person, with fire and with family. This celebration will give thanks to the prosperity of this province, for the work they do in this province, and it will be that new beginning. It certainly is a time of celebration. They have had a new beginning in our province, where they've come into our community and have been excited about celebrating.

I certainly laud and thank the member from Thornhill for having the initiative to bring this forward and to celebrate with those of Persian descent.

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): I'm very happy to speak in favour of this. Nowruz means "new day." It's a celebration that I understand has been going on for many thousands of years in Persia. It's always celebrated on the first day of spring. That is significant, because spring, as you know, celebrates renewal. We've come through the winter successfully, people have survived winter, and the first day of spring is the renewal, moving into a new era.

In many ways, Nowruz, celebrating renewal, also speaks to the Iranian experience here in Canada. Let me give you some facts about the Iranian experience here in Canada, because it very much is a renewal for Iranians and very much a renewal for Canada; for Ontario and for Toronto. Ninety-six per cent of all Canadian Iranians are first-generation Iranians here in Canada. 58% of those Canadian Iranians are resident here in Ontario, and of that 58%, 44% of Canadian Iranians live in the city of Toronto or the GTA. I'm very happy to say that in my own riding of Willowdale, in the north part of the city, there is an enormous Iranian community. In Willowdale,

as in Toronto, as in the GTA, as in the province and as in the country, the Iranian community has made a huge contribution.

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The vast majority of the Iranians here in Canada are in their prime and productive years, along with their young families coming up behind them. That's very, very significant, because the Iranian community is highly educated—highly, highly educated. In my experience with the Iranian community that I deal with, there are engineers, doctors, lawyers, scientists, technologists, business persons, medical personnel. Combined with that skill set and their high level of very sophisticated education and training, they are truly leading this city and province and country in a renewal of our society, a renewal of our economy. That's why Nowruz is such an important festival, celebrating renewal of the year.

I want to just refer to this House and get on the record a research article entitled *Iranians in Canada: A Statistical Analysis*—some 26 pages. It's prepared by the department of systems and computer engineering, Carleton University, by Professor Garousi. This is worth reading for all of us. It's a very detailed analysis of the Iranian community in Canada, in Ontario and in the GTA. It sets out the facts. We have a lot of conversations and a general anecdotal awareness of the contribution that the Iranian community makes, but this document—I urge all of you to read it—sets out the facts of the Iranian contribution.

There are, however, some difficulties that the Iranian community is dealing with, as are other new immigrant communities. It would be remiss of me if I didn't get those on the record. At page 24, the document highlights the two most significant problems that Iranians face here in Canada. Not surprisingly, they are underemployment—not unemployment, because everybody works—and underutilization of their professional skills. The document then goes on to analyze the cause of those problems and points out that the cause is largely a lack of recognition of non-Canadian credentials and, again, underutilization of Iranian professionals. I think that's something that needs redressing as we approach Nowruz, which is the renewal of the Iranian contribution to Canada.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm pleased to participate in this debate. I want, of course, at the outset, to pledge my support for this legislation. It is appropriate that we recognize not only the meaning of this important event as it has been over the last 3,000 years—the principles remain the same—but in so doing, I believe what this Legislature is doing, more than recognizing an event on a calendar, is recognizing the important contribution of a people who throughout the ages have made such a significant contribution to civilization, to who we are as humanity.

As well, as a provincial Legislature, we have the responsibility to recognize the foundations of our communities and the building of this great province and the building, indeed, of our country.

I look across the floor often in this place and continue to marvel at the wonderful opportunities that this province and this country afford us, because many of us are not born Canadians. Many of us cannot point to generations here, either in the province of Ontario or even this country. Personally, I came to this country at the age of five with my parents, who made a decision, very unselfishly so, to immigrate to this country. My father often said to me when I asked him the question, "Whatever prompted you to make the decision to come to this country?" to leave many of the very stable environments that he had and the family had, it was simply this: "I did it because I wanted more opportunity for you and your sisters." It was a very selfless act on behalf of my parents to make that very difficult step. There will never, ever be any greater sense of appreciation in my heart towards my parents than for that very act that they took to choose to make this province and this country their home.

Many here who now have the privilege of representing our constituencies as members of provincial Parliament are immigrants. I'm sure that in the minds of our parents, when they made the decision to come here, they never dreamed that their sons or their daughters or their grandchildren would ever be in a position of elected office in this province, but here we are and we're grateful, and so we have a responsibility.

I say to the member who brought this forward, congratulations to him for having the initiative and recognizing and honouring the Iranian community through this initiative. Much can be said about the economic initiative of the Iranian community. They are a true entrepreneurial spirit and they are people who know what it's like to work hard. They are people who know what it's like to expect nothing if you don't put something in. You work; you are responsible for your family, for your own self-sufficiency. They are not a people who come forward with their hand out; rather, they are known for people who give a hand up. That is the generosity of the individuals whom I have come to admire and appreciate, both within the community in the broader sense as well as personal friends.

I want to take this opportunity to recognize an individual who has come to mean a great deal to me and who is an example in terms of both business proficiency and success, but someone who has never, ever stopped to consume those successes on himself or his family, but has taken the next step and has shared that success with the rest of the community. I refer to Mr. Farsad Kiani, who has businesses around the world. In fact, I tried to get in touch with him this morning. He's in London, England, today—as he is, I think, almost on a regular basis, four or five times a month. He travels to the US because in his conglomerate of businesses he has facilities internationally. This is an individual, when you meet him, about whom you don't get a sense of a magnate. Rather, you get a sense of someone who is first of all very human, is someone who cares deeply about the individual he is interacting with, and who also seeks no accolade for the things that he does or his family does within the community.

1040

I had the great honour a few months ago of being asked on behalf of Mr. Kiani to present awards at York Central Hospital in Richmond Hill, where Mr. Farsad Kiani and Mrs. Joan Bush Kiani have provided an endowment that recognizes and rewards York Central Hospital staff and physicians who regularly demonstrate outstanding examples of great customer service and compassionate care. I had the privilege of presenting the awards on behalf of Mr. and Mrs. Kiani to volunteers within the hospital, to staff members and, I will never forget, especially to one lady. This is someone who worked in the support services of the hospital, and when I presented the award, the lady broke out in tears. It was the first time she had ever been recognized in such a gracious way for the work she has been doing in that hospital. But, you see, it took somebody who understands the importance of contribution to a community to have the sense to actually come forward and institutionalize an award that recognizes that kind of effort.

So I say to the Iranian community, thank you, not only for Mr. Farsad Kiani and Mrs. Kiani, but for the many individuals within the Iranian community who are made of the same humanity and who have the same giving heart and the same compassion that you have brought and instilled into the fabric of our province and our country. We are richer and stronger because of your contribution.

In that same sense, I want to pay tribute to someone who has made a significant contribution as well to our province. This is someone whom I met within the context of serving as a member of provincial Parliament, and that is Mr. Jamal Gharavi. He came to this country as a pediatrician and, sadly, was not able and is not able to practise as a pediatrician.

If there's anything as a Legislature that we should do, collectively, in a non-partisan way—put everything else aside, folks; put away whatever label we may have as a political party, whether we be government or opposition, and let's do one thing and get it right, and that's the issue of foreign-trained professionals: giving them the respect to practise here in this province and in this country. There has been so much discussion and platitude given to this—and there isn't anyone in this House who doesn't see the injustice of someone having been trained, someone having practised in the medical profession, having operated and performed surgeries for years in their country of origin, and we give them points in our immigration system—here is the travesty—for being professionals. When they make application for immigration, they are told at the point of immigration, "Yes, we're going to move you to the top of the list because you are a professional. You're a doctor. You're an engineer. You're an accountant." What does that message give them? That means, of course, that, "If I get high marks when I come to the country, I'll be welcomed and I'll have an opportunity to be the professional for which you gave me all of these points." Not true. These people leave where they are, they come here and they find out that they may as well tear up their professional designation, because we say it's worthless here.

I've said this often tongue-in-cheek, but there's a terrible truth to it: In the greater Toronto area, the quickest way to get a doctor is to call 967-1111. For those who don't know that number, that's the Pizza Pizza number. And it is sad because it's true. We have professionals who are delivering pizzas or driving cabs or working in other occupations when we should be honouring them for the professional contribution they can make. There is no shortage of doctors in Ontario—none. We have 3,000 doctors in Ontario who are not being allowed to practise, and shame on this Legislature for not taking the initiative and fixing that problem.

Interjections.

Mr. Klees: There are members of the government who are groaning. Now, hold it.

Interjection.

Mr. Klees: No. Don't talk about Mr. Harris. I am not justifying anything that any previous government has done. If we can help—I'm simply saying that every government has failed on this issue; every government. I take that responsibility, and I'm saying, let's move on. Rather than having this political DNA that seems to be imprinted into every one of our hearts, let's move forward and do something about it. That's what I'm saying. Forget the partisan deliberations about this. But I digress.

Mr. Marchese: Stay focused.

Mr. Klees: I want to stay focused on paying tribute to Mr. Jamal Gharavi, who, as I say, came to practise as a pediatrician but, because he was unable to, he has now focused on a very worthwhile community project. He is now working for Catholic Community Services of York Region and he has developed a program referred to as Focus on Fathers. It's a parenting program that helps fathers become better fathers. What a wonderful calling. If there's any way that we can strengthen our communities, it's to help to strengthen the family.

Again, isn't that so indicative of the Iranian community? If there is an example that we can take as Canadians from not just the Iranian community—I refer to it because that's the nature of the debate today—it is the respect for family, it is the respect for parents, young people, our pages. If there's anything at all that we should be learning from this debate, it's the fact that strong families strengthen our communities, and it starts with respect—respect for mothers and fathers and grandparents and respect for each other. That's an example that we have in this wonderful community.

So once again, I commend the member, my colleague from York region, for bringing forward this important bill. You have my support, and you will rightly deserve the honour of the community on whose behalf you have brought this forward.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I hope that I can do proud my friend from Trinity–Spadina in my anthropological talk here. I told him a little bit of what I wanted to say.

This is an ancient tradition. This is a tradition that not only comes from Persia, not only comes from Iran, but it is a tradition that literally transcends all of the cultures

and all of the religions of the world. You see, many religions celebrate this day—many, many religions—even unto this time. This is the spring Ohigon and the Kwan Yin day of Buddhism. It is the Shunkei Sorei-Sai day of Shinto—March 21. It is the Ostara day of Wicca and it is, of course, the Nowruz day for those who come originally from or whose ancestors can be traced through Iran.

Under the Muslim calendar, this is the year 1375, and we will be celebrating that this year. In the old Fasli calendar, it is the year 3744. Just so people know what that is, that is the renewal of the world. That is the day on which Zarathustra received his revelation. It is the day that is held sacred for the creation of fire. It is, of course, a very Iranian holiday; a very Iranian thought.

1050

It was in ancient times, the first Nowruz, when the whole cycle of life began. The sun, in those days, did not change; it was transfixed in the sky. There was no day and night. There was no male and female. There were no seasons. Everything was transfixed. It was on that first day, that first Nowruz, that, through the sacrifice of plants and animals, all of these things changed. Everything changed: There were days and nights, there were seasons, and the sun did move across the sky every day. It is that which is celebrated.

That ancient religion that came out of what is modern-day Iran has literally influenced every single religious thought in at least the western world and probably the entire world.

When we look at what happened and how the celebrations take place even unto this day, there is much in common with the religions that many of us profess in Ontario. It has much in common with Christian Easter. If you look what happens, it is a spring and a rebirth. It is something which we can easily understand, even in a Christian society.

I look back with sadness. I think what a different kind of world this may have been had this wonderful holiday and the people who first thought of it survived. One of the saddest days—except, I guess, if you were a real hero-worshipper of Alexander the Great—was 334 BC, in which the magnificent kingdom and Persepolis were destroyed. It was there that the faith that brought the first Nowruz was destroyed. There's not much left of that today. You can go and see the archaeological remains, but there's not much left of it.

That was a sad day. But do you know something? The celebration of this faith, the celebration of Nowruz, continued beyond the destruction of Persepolis. It persisted up until the time of the Sassanids, it persisted in those who migrated from Iran to India—and there's a very large Farsi community there today—and it persists here in Canada, as people have come to this great land.

It is, and continues to be in modern times, a 13-day celebration. Can you imagine? Thirteen days. We have the 12 days of Christmas; they have the 13 days of Nowruz. It is a wonderful time when all kinds of celebrations take place. What I think it is most akin to

and what we can best understand in terms of our own Christmas celebrations is that this is a time of shopping. It is a time of gifts; it is a time of feasting; it is a time of family and get-togethers. It's a time when money is exchanged: new bills and shiny coins. It is also very much like Easter. It is a time when all of the children get new clothes and wear them. It is a celebration, immensely, of life.

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): Like your tie.

Mr. Prue: And my tie. My ties are legendary. Hope you like it.

This is a religion, this is a thought that has literally lasted millennia. It is said that it probably started with the Sumerians, and the Sumerians transferred it to the Babylonians, to the Achaemenians, to the Elamites, to the Akkadians and to the Sassanids. It has survived Islam. It is part of the tradition, even in Christian and Farsi households. It is part of the tradition for those who still follow the Zoroastrian faith. It is part of the tradition even in Islamic cultures. Even in times when Islam was trying to do away with this great celebration, it has survived.

I commend the people who are here today and I commend the member who brought this forward, because this is a celebration of life. It is a celebration that is truly and uniquely part of the Persian community, but it is a celebration that all of us as Canadians can interpret, understand and appreciate and all of us should celebrate with every single passion that we can because it is a celebration that life will continue. Even though all of these ancient histories and all of these ancient cultures and religions have come and gone, what has been transfixed, what has remained is this belief in the rebirth, in the renewal, in family, in getting together and in celebrating life. That is what the Persian community has brought to us. I commend you for coming to Canada. I commend you for having the faith to come here and to bring this tradition with you.

As other speakers have said, we need to do more to help new immigrants. We need to recognize the rich history they bring and the culture they bring, and we also need to recognize the talents they have brought. If this bill in any way will do that, then we all must support the bill and we must support the member who brought it. More so, we must support the community that is now an integral part of all things we call Canadian. Happy Nowruz.

Mr. Ruprecht: Congratulations to Mr. Racco, the member from Thornhill, who introduced Bill 63, an Act to proclaim Nowruz Day. Today in the gallery helping us to celebrate this very special event and the passage, I hope, of this bill are Ali Samiian, Mahnaz Shahbazi, Samin Isaveghlou, Simin Isabiglu, Nader Naderi, David Farmani, Alidad Mafinezam, Merdad Hariri, Lily Pourzand, Maryam Aghvami, Behnam Esfahanizadeh, Masoud Mansourzadeh and Mohamed Tajdolati. Thank you for being here today to help us celebrate this special event.

This day is obviously very symbolic of a community which has requested this day for many years, and we are here today to say thank you to them for their contribution and also thank you to Mr. Racco. We know that finally, after these many years, this bill has come forward, and we wish to congratulate them.

This is a rich community. In 1946, after the war, the first students began to arrive, and then from 1963 to 1966 we had students come from Iran to join us here in Canada as immigrants. But the main wave came from 1976 to 1985, and consequently the richness of their culture is reflected today in Ontario.

I have, of course, as most members know, written a book called Toronto's Many Faces, and in the book is a very important and very special chapter on the Persian community. I want to very briefly just tell you how rich they really are. Not many of us know the media in this community: Images of Iran is a CityTV channel; the Iranian is the monthly newspaper; there is an Iranian program on Rogers Cable; the Iran Star, a weekly newspaper; Iranian Women; Rasa magazine; Zabran weekly newspaper; and on and on it goes. It's amazing that a community of less than 100,000 would have this kind of media representation. Organizations: the Iranian Community Association of Ontario; the Iranian Women's Organization; the Iran Ethnic Foundation; the Persian Traditional Art and Culture Foundation; and on and on it goes.

But much more important, look at the section of prominent Torontonians. Here is a people, whom those of you who spoke earlier have mentioned, with tremendous contributions. Here they are, less than 100,000 strong, and making a tremendous contribution throughout all the professions.

Yes, there is more to be done, and we made a promise which we are going to keep. But let's look at the prominent Torontonians: Nasser Akmal, owner of Persian Rugs; Shane Bagi, developer; Esanau Isragi, another developer; Sheena Garandazi, composer; Mr. Hakim, who was mentioned earlier; Idi Ghospanian, conductor; Niyam Kazemi, graphic designer; Fred Kazravi, entrepreneur; Dr. Lafti Monsouri, former director general of the Canadian Opera Company; Dr. Asalam Mohajer, recipient of the Roy Thomson Award; Kaza Mohadevi, owner of Iran International Carpet and Rugs; Dr. Fazemi Mortazavi, member of the Immigration and Refugee Board, community leader and philanthropist; Riza Navami, artist and architect; Dr. Seeva Taha, lawyer; and on and on it goes.

They have come here and they have selected this great country. Why? Because the preamble to the Constitution says that this country has the right—we are fiercely Canadian, but also we have the right, because of this Constitutional preamble, to be proud of our background and proud of our heritage. This is the genius of Canada and this is why so many Iranians and those of Persian background have come to this country. Equality before the law: Wow! That's an experiment that we, you and I and this generation of Canadians, are participating in:

equality before the law. The school system: equal treatment of everyone not only before the law but in the schools, with the opportunities they have.

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When we think of what this country has done, when we think of the contribution of Iranian Canadians to Canada, when we think that we are a multicultural country that has an experiment the whole world is watching, then we know Iranian Canadians and the rest of us have developed a great country that we can all be proud of, that all ethnic Canadians and all people from all over the world can come to this country and say, "We have a great country, we have a great culture, and more power today." Congratulations to the Iranian Canadian community.

I want to say thank you for coming today.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Racco, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Racco: Let me thank all the members in this honourable House who spoke. Because all of you spoke in favour of Bill 63, I trust that we might be able to deal with it quickly, so that this March we will be able to celebrate doubly such an important occasion.

It certainly has been a pleasure for me to work with the community. I want to tell the House that my party, the Premier, the honourable Sorbara, the Honourable Smitherman, MPP Zimmer and myself have been in touch with the community quite regularly to make sure that their wishes are reflected in the decision we make in this honourable House.

This community, as has been said, is certainly providing many professionals who are running our hospitals, who are building this city, this region and this province with the best quality residential housing that we can expect. Of course, they are active in almost any industry and profession in our province.

This is a community that has done so much for the province, but also for themselves. I want to say to them, thank you for what you have done, but most importantly, thank you for what you're going to do, not only for you and your families but for the province of Ontario and for Canada. You have provided additional honour to this province. You have been the best that you can be for yourself and for our province, and you deserve all our respect. I believe Bill 63 will go to some little degree to do that, so that together we can celebrate not only your heritage but Ontario heritage, because your community, like my community and our community, is Ontario, is Canada.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should continue and expand its initiatives and investment in public transit, especially in assisting the fast-growth municipalities in the "905 belt" around the city of Toronto to link with one another through new or better-organized public transit links between these municipa-

lities to ease gridlock, enhance opportunities for employment, and reduce carbon emissions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, you have up to 10 minutes.

Mr. Delaney: This morning, I've got a resolution for the movers and shakers in Ontario. One of the drawbacks of being a mover and shaker in Ontario in the 21st century is that before you can do your shaking, you have to move from where you have your breakfast to where you do the shaking part of your livelihood.

Therein lies the challenge. You can stew in the crawling gridlock on the 401, the QEW or the DVP in TO, you can edge your way along the Queensway in Ottawa, and wherever people come to live, to work or to be entertained, they've got to figure out how to navigate through the traffic, then park the car, and only then focus on what they've actually come to do.

The peak period of commuter traffic may be rush hour in Ottawa, it may be rush minute in some of our smaller cities, or it may be our infamous all-day gridlock here in the GTA. Over and above the cost in time, parking and frazzled nerves, gridlock costs us in pollution, land use, and just plain visual blight.

Civilized cities enable you to get around in them without having to bring two tonnes or more of steel with you. Hong Kong, for example, packs about the same population as the two dozen municipalities that make up the GTA into an area less than the size of my riding of Mississauga West. You couldn't even begin to imagine trying to make a world-class city like Hong Kong, Paris, London, New York, San Francisco or Vienna function if everyone needed a car to move around, so why should Ontario's world-class centres of activity be any different?

This issue is one of the things that brought me to this Ontario Legislature. It's one of the reasons that I got into politics. In Mississauga West, one of the difficulties we had is that our people have to commute to commute. In the area that I live in, in northwestern Mississauga, our flow of traffic in the morning consists of people getting into their cars and sitting in gridlock to get to parking lots to park their cars to get on GO trains to take the GO train to downtown to get on the subway to go to work. Now, part of this is the normal course in the 21st century of people moving farther and farther away in order to be able to find a place that they can afford to buy to live in comfort. But part of it is also, as a society, our reluctance to organize ourselves to help people get from where they are to where they need to be.

One of the things that I campaigned on in 2003 to help ease some of the gridlock—it's not a long-term solution in and of itself, but it's part of the solution—is to get a new GO train station built at Lisgar in northwest Mississauga. On the day on which the Minister of Transportation announced the station, I got a call from one of the reporters on the Toronto Star, who said, "Are you aware that your station at Lisgar is the first time in 25 years that there's been a new station built on the Milton GO line?" I said that no, I wasn't. He said, "It's also the first time in 25 years that there's been a new station built in Missis-

sauga.” That shows you, as a society, just how reluctant we’ve been to come to grips with the fact that people have got to be able to get from where they are to where they need to be without, as I said earlier, having to take two tonnes of steel with them to do it.

This morning, for me, was a perfect example. I left my home at about quarter to 9 and had, I thought, lots of time to get down here. But I ran into frustrating gridlock that really shouldn’t have been there on the QEW, and although I’ve gotten pretty good at finding a few little shortcuts when the major routes are clogged up, I would have loved to be able to leave home after the last GO train scheduled had left and been able to take public transit conveniently to get here to downtown Toronto. But I couldn’t. Part of that reason lies in the reluctance of governments of all stripes over the last two generations to make decisions that needed to be made in order to help people, especially here in the GTA, move from where they are to where they need to be.

For example, again using my riding of Mississauga West, from west of Milton, where the GO train line ends, to east of the Humber River, where the track bed opens up a little bit, we have two tracks that take us into downtown Toronto. Forty years ago, that line had two tracks. CP Rail, which owns the track bed, uses it at pretty near full capacity all day long. For GO Transit and for all of the commuters who depend on it, we have a narrow corridor in time, as well as in land, in which we can move from where we live, which is northwest Mississauga, to where most of us want to work, which is downtown Toronto. That time begins at 6:30 in the morning and ends at 8:10 going out of Meadowvale; add five minutes to the other stations of Streetsville, Erindale, Cooksville, Dixie and Kipling.

This GO train station that we’ve just got at Lisgar will help by taking some of that east-west flow of traffic and allowing a little bit of it to move north in the morning and south at night in an area where we don’t have roads that are simply clogged with traffic. That, in and of itself, will help. Another thing that will help has been the agreement by our Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal to help fund a third track on that Milton GO line. That third track will allow the pie to be made a little bit larger and will allow commuter traffic to run both ways all day long. We used to have that. Fifteen years ago, we could get from northwest Mississauga to downtown, and we could get, most importantly, from downtown back to northwest Mississauga during the day. Today we can’t. We need to more than ever, because most of the growth in the high-growth areas of the GTA, and especially in the my city of Mississauga, has taken place in the area where I live—in the northwest corner. It was a pledge that I made to the people who sent me here to do something about that problem, and we’ve started on that.

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I’m hoping that in the next five to seven years, we can get the federal government to match some of Ontario’s infrastructure funding and get CP Rail, which also needs the capacity that that third track would offer, and get

everybody to the table and get construction started on that. This isn’t just a minor project. That third track on the Milton line, in and of itself, was estimated at approximately \$300 million. Having sat there on the GO train in the morning and watched, I can count about six or eight bridges, including the big span over the Humber River, that need to be upgraded in order to make that happen.

The government of which I’m privileged to be a part has worked hard on public transit issues and made some progress. Although there’s a lot of work still to be done, we can point to some of the progress that we have made. Let me quote here from a news release from the city of Mississauga:

“Through the province’s gas tax funding, we have been able to improve service frequency along our major routes”—this is referring to busing—“ease overcrowding and expand service into new neighbourhoods,” said Mayor McCallion. ‘We have acquired 72 new accessible buses and we are now using smart buses to provide better service times along our busiest corridor—Huronario Street. We have expanded the city centre transit terminal to provide better service between GO Transit and Mississauga Transit and to act as a future link for a bus rapid transit (BRT) network. Now we need the federal and provincial governments to fund construction of GO Transit’s BRT network, which will be a critical inter-regional transit corridor along the GTA.’”

Mayor McCallion points out a very important thing: If what I wanted to do is, say, get from downtown Mississauga or downtown Oakville and get to my colleague Mr. Racco’s hometown of Markham, if I wanted to get to downtown Markham, I’d have to go through Metro Toronto to do it or I’d have to take the car. What we need are transit corridors to link the 905 belt together in much the same way as we have a hub-and-spokes transit system right now that takes people from the 905 belt into the centre of the city and in the evening takes them home again but doesn’t allow those thriving municipalities along the 905 belt to link with one another.

Why is this important? Because 15 years ago, Metro Toronto outpopulated those municipalities, which were then mostly suburbs in the 905 belt, approximately two to one. Today it’s approximately one to one. Within about a generation, it will be two to one the other way. Our 905 belt will have twice the population of Metro Toronto, and we’ve got a band of about five to seven years to make some critical decisions, while we still can, in order to help the municipalities—and there are about a dozen and a half of them in the 905 belt—link to one another.

I thank you very much for the time to bring this resolution to this House, and I look forward to hearing discussion on it.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): It gives me pleasure to be able to put a few words on the record to the resolution from the member from Mississauga West. First of all, I’ll begin by saying that I support the resolution, and I think everyone in the House will support the resolution.

Listening to the presentation, he started off by suggesting a new definition of the movers and shakers in our

society, and I just wanted to say that I felt good about that, because I am one of those movers and shakers. I come in from my great riding of Oxford every morning, and it takes me between two and two and a half hours to arrive here from Oxford county, recognizing that at least two thirds, if not three quarters, of the way takes less than a quarter to a third of the time. The rest of the time we get caught in the traffic and the gridlock that exists in and around Toronto. I can recognize the detriment that it has on the time that people spend, the detriment it has on our society and our environment. I think it's very important to suggest that we all should support this resolution to make sure more gets done.

I would just suggest to the member that maybe a more appropriate way—or maybe he has already done that—is to speak to the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Finance and realize that more needs to be done for our transportation infrastructure in this province. That's why I was a little surprised. I was very appreciative of this resolution coming before us, but I was surprised that it was coming from a member of the government, particularly a member of the government living right in that gridlock area, who would have seen what was needed to get it done. I'll have to assume that he has done that and the government has said, "No, we have other priorities," and so the member is now seeing that this is the way to bring not only before the Legislature but before the people of Ontario that he agrees that the government is not funding the infrastructure enough and that more should be done.

Having said that, I just wanted to speak quickly about the one initiative that the government has done after many requests from the municipal government. The government finally came through with giving a little bit more funding, which they said was part of the gas tax. But if it was part of the gas tax—and I disagree with it. In fact, the gas tax all goes into the general revenues, and then the government decides where they send the general revenues. If it's a gas tax, it would have to somehow be associated with where the gas tax was generated to send it back to where it was generated. There's obviously nothing in the legislation or in the process that the government presently uses that does that.

The big problem we have is that the decision was made by the government that all the gas tax collected in the province—I shouldn't say all the gas tax, but the gas tax that they're allocating, which is the two cents per litre that is collected throughout the province, is then sent back to the municipalities that have transit. In my riding, two of the municipalities got some funding. The city of Woodstock got \$289,000 and the town of Ingersoll got \$46,000. Tillsonburg, of course, is about a third as big as Ingersoll; they have nothing, because it's dedicated only to transit.

Of course, we must remember that in rural Ontario, the only means of transportation is the roads and the bridges and the infrastructure needed for us to get from place to place. Not only do we have farther to go, but we have fewer people in the area to pay for those services, so it becomes very important.

Just for the member's benefit, I would say that my colleague John Yakabuski, from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, introduced Bill 3, the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Amendment Act (Assistance to Municipalities), and I think in this debate it's very important to again put on the record what my colleague said:

"The reason I introduced this bill is because when the present government brought in a gas tax rebate program, they extended it only to the 105 municipalities, out of some 445, that have a public or rapid transit system operating in their municipality. We feel this is a fundamental issue of fairness with respect to the way rural Ontario is treated. One of the great problems in rural Ontario today is the ability to keep in good condition the infrastructure they're responsible for, such as the county roads, the municipal roads, and the bridges, which in my county is one of the biggest challenges we have. Warden Sweet"—the warden of Renfrew county—"could certainly let you know that we have over 250 bridges in Renfrew county alone."

Again, I think it's so important, if we look at the gas tax and the issue of the gas tax—I know that is not directly related to the motion, Mr. Speaker, but you will have been listening to the member and he brought it up in his debate to the motion—and the distribution, if we go back in time and the way it has been ever since the gas tax, it was implemented and it was called a road tax on gasoline. That was supposed to be a tax that the government collected to help build roads.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): And the Tories fixed that.

Mr. Hardeman: I can tell you that shortly after it I was done, I don't think anyone spent all the money they were collecting on roads.

Mr. Marchese: Why not?

Mr. Hardeman: I think it was during the New Democratic years when they reduced the spending on roads because they had other priorities, but that's not the point.

The point is that the principal use of the gas tax was to be for the roads that gas vehicles were going to use, and that, in fairness, is not happening. We have a problem with the fact that money that is supposed to be going to roads is going to transit. That's not to say that that much should not go to transit. We now have a motion here that says even more is needed for transit. So the challenge is not where that money is going; I think we have to start realizing that the gas tax that municipalities are getting is in fact a portion from general revenue funds, and the portion both for mass transit and for roads is not sufficient to meet the demands of our infrastructure in roads.

As I said, I will be supporting this resolution because I think it's headed in the right direction. We've got to convince the members of the government, including the member putting forward this resolution, to put more money in our infrastructure and do something with this gridlock. I don't think there is anything that bothers the average person who is traveling back and forth every day

and spending all that time on our highways and byways more than sitting there, waiting. As he said, if you're not moving, you're not shaking, and it's true. If you're not moving, nothing is happening except that you're polluting our air and wasting our energy.

I support the resolution, but I would also ask that he ask his government to be fairer with the distribution and make sure all of Ontario benefits from the program the government puts in place. As I said, we will be voting for the resolution.

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Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I looked at this resolution, and at first blush anyone can say it is a good resolution, but in order for me to be persuaded, and I can be persuaded, I need to see some government action. We need to see where the money is. We need to see where the actions are. We need to see where the commitment is.

As a Legislature, why do we even have to ask the government and the executive council to do what is self-evident to all of us? We all know that much of southern Ontario is in gridlock. We all know about the carbon emissions. We all know about the amount of money that is being lost to the economy while people in trucks and transportation are gridlocked. We know the tremendous cost. We know about the downloading to the municipalities, which cannot keep up their end of road maintenance and transit and transportation systems. What we need to know is not whether we are committed to this, because of course it is self-evident that we should all be committed; what we need to know is, what are the plans? Where is the money? The budget is only about a month or two months away. Where is the money going to be contained in this budget? Certainly there was not adequate monies put aside in the last budget, and I doubt very much, in spite of this resolution and the good words contained in it, that there will be sufficient monies put aside in the next budget either.

The Liberals have a lot to say about this much-vaunted gas tax, of which we approve. We had the same thing in our platform. I'm not going to say that the two cents isn't a good idea, but it has taken forever for the two cents to work its way in, and in fact won't work its way in to be fully functional until October of this year. Is it enough? I don't think so. It is not enough because the gas tax is not providing even the same resources to places like the city of Toronto that they got pre-gas tax. Even with the gas tax at its full capacity of two cents this year, less money will be going to transit under that gas tax than the Conservatives gave to Toronto for transit. Can you believe that? I find that hard to believe. The reality is that the money going to transit in Toronto this year will be \$180 million less than they got in 1995. You can talk about the much-vaunted gas tax but there needs to be something else. There needs to be a commitment from the province of Ontario that it is committed to the building of subways, to putting transportation and buses on the roads, and to the upkeep of the roads and bridges in this province on which public transit will run.

There was much talk in the last election about the two cents for gas tax, but there was nothing in the Liberal platform, and there is no plan even till this day, for intermodal transportation between cities. This is the really big failure. We believe there should be at least one cent for intermodal transportation. If there is two cents for transit, there should be at least one cent for intermodal transportation. That means buses and trains that go between municipalities. It would be possible for someone living in Mississauga to work in Durham without taking a car if it was possible for intermodal transit to connect those communities either directly, through Union Station, or around Toronto. This is what needs to be done: We need to have intermodal transit and transportation, and it simply is not on the drawing board.

I look at other jurisdictions, at countries like Japan, at countries throughout Europe or the British Isles. You can see the genius of their transportation systems. If you hop on a train, you can literally go almost anywhere at any time. They run all day; they run into the evening hours. I know that even in the city of Toronto, in which I have lived almost my entire life with the exception of one year in Ottawa, where I live close to the Woodbine subway station, at 9 o'clock at night, if I'm still here in the Legislature, if we sit till 9:30, I cannot get the last bus home to my house, and I live just off the Woodbine subway station. If I can't catch that last bus, it's either a cab fare, which is about \$7, or it's a four-and-a-half-kilometre walk.

That's the problem, because the transit is so—

Interjections.

Mr. Prue: The walk may be better for me, but transit is so starved of funds that even for a downtown community on the Woodbine subway station—I only live four and a half kilometres from that subway station—there is no bus to get home. This is what needs to be done: The transit has to not only expand in terms of the routes it has, but those routes that are in existence have to be able to run later in the evening and earlier in the morning for people to take advantage of them. This is what happens in other great jurisdictions. This happens in Japan and Great Britain. I look at the experiment in London. They have really pushed to clean up the downtown core of traffic. They charge people to go in now. Are we looking at that experiment? We're not looking at that experiment. I'm not sure I advocate it, but we're not even looking at it to see whether that will keep the cars out of downtown Toronto or downtown Ottawa; we are not looking at it at all. We are not putting any disincentives for people to come downtown with their cars. All we have here is silence.

I looked at this resolution and I thought, where is the money for the transit systems? I heard what my colleague from the Conservative Party had to say about the smaller towns not getting any money from the gas tax—and with good reason. That's because they're not running any transit systems. We have to be committed to transit: 85% of all the transit vehicles and 85% of all the people who use transit in the GTA use it in Toronto. In fact, there are

more yellow TTC vehicles—or at least there were. I'm not sure that's still the case, but there were more yellow vehicles when I was a member of Toronto city council. Those are the ones that grind the streetcar tracks and take the TTC employees around; they're not for the general public. There were more yellow vehicles in the TTC arsenal and in their warehouse than there were transit vehicles in the rest of the GTA. I know there have been some changes since then, but the reality is that most of it is downtown and most of it is woefully underfunded. The TTC is starving for operating funds and this year is again going to have to increase the cost of Metropasses and the cost of fares.

They're not alone. I opened the paper today. Here we are debating this, and members from Mississauga, what do I read in the paper today? Here it is from the Toronto Star: "Transit Fares Rise in Mississauga: Mississauga Transit users will have to come up with an extra 25 cents starting Monday as fares increase to \$2.50 a ride." That is a 10% increase. We're talking about getting better transit. What is this except dissuading people to use that transit?

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I look as well at what's happening with the TTC and Howard Moscoe's latest idea of giving free TTC passes. There's a lot that can be done and a lot that should be done, but we need to start with being true partners with the municipalities. The poor municipalities—Toronto's running a \$212-million deficit, Mississauga is having to raise their taxes by 5.9%, and here we have a resolution asking us for better transit. When the municipalities are treated better, when there is a true commitment to them and to the transit authorities they run, then and only then will I give credence to a resolution like this, and then and only then will I believe the executive council will come forward with the necessary funds to do what this very laudable and very courageous, I might say, resolution attempts to do. I just don't believe in my heart of hearts that it's going to make it from this member of the Liberal Party to that front bench in the Liberal Party and make any difference at all.

Mr. Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak in support of the resolution from my good friend Bob Delaney. I'm going to express my support in two ways. One is with respect to the current government's program, which is helping my community of Niagara Falls, and then to explain how this resolution can benefit the residents of the Niagara Peninsula as a whole in terms of a Niagara regional inter-municipal transportation system easing gridlock, enhancing opportunities for employment and, finally, reducing carbon emissions.

First, let me tell this House that I'm pleased to indicate that the McGuinty government's gas tax refund fuelled an amazing 700% increase in weekend ridership in the city of Niagara Falls. From March 6 to June 5, Niagara Transit offered extended weekend service and special weekend fares of 25 cents. The 25 cents resulted in a ridership increase of 700%. It was such an excellent program that the transit commission decided to give the

citizens of Niagara Falls an additional break for the entire summer when Niagara Transit offered loonie weekends. Passengers paid \$1 rather than the normal adult fare of \$2.25, or \$2 for seniors.

More important, according to Niagara Transit's general manager, Terry Librock, was the fact that Niagara Transit's regular overall ridership increased by up to 13% for the entire year. Terry attributes 12% of the 13% to the 124 hours of extra weekend service to the community that the gas tax program funded. Terry also believes, as do I, that the government's program is a great investment by the province for municipal transit. The gas tax is paying off for our city because it provides long-term, stable funding, allowing the Niagara Transit Commission to plan significant transit improvements at the local level.

This year's provincial gas tax funding for Niagara Transit will increase by 50% to over \$820,000. With this money, Niagara Transit will use the funds to buy new buses and improve and create better services but, unfortunately, they will be doing this alone and not in an integrated fashion as my friend and colleague's motion speaks to. All of this is great news for transit, but the member from Mississauga has it right when he says there's a need to expand on these excellent initiatives and investments in public transit. We need to link our transit systems together for maximum benefit through new or better-organized public transit links; for example, a GO train from Niagara Falls. For me to come from Queen's Park in Toronto to Niagara Falls, I have to take the TTC. It's \$2.50 to Union Station. I have to take one of two trains; that's \$34.50. When I get back, I have to pay \$2.25 for Niagara Transit, and then I may have to use the People Mover System in Niagara Falls to eventually get home. That's a cost of about \$90 return.

So there's certainly an opportunity for us to work together to create a much more integrated system, and that's the reason I want to support this resolution.

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): I'm happy to support this resolution. The member opposite has hit on something. We need seamless transit in the GTA area, and we need that transit because the GTA area has a special responsibility to this province and to this country. We often hear that the GTA, southern Ontario, the area around Toronto, is the engine of economic growth for this province and indeed for this country. We've also heard that over the next 10, 15 or 20 years, competition in world economies is going to be fierce. We have to put forward and rely on every advantage we can possibly muster here in Ontario to be a strong economic competitor.

In the next 10, 15 or 20 years, it's expected that there will be an additional five million new Canadians, new population, in and around the GTA area. To build our economy so that Ontario and the GTA continue as the economic engine of this country, we need several things. We need an effective health care system so that workers and people are attracted to this province. We need an effective education system so that people are attracted to this province and to this area and that we provide the

necessary training and skills. We also need an effective transit system, not just to move the member opposite from Brampton into this Legislature, so that my legislative assistant, Shawn Knights, who lives in Brampton, can get in here, and so that my residents in Willowdale can get downtown and uptown, but we also need to concentrate on, in addition to moving people, moving commercial transit. That's roads and highways by which the trucks, tractor trailers and vehicles—transit—haul the economic goods that this province produces. They can move it around the GTA area, quickly move it out of the province down to the border, and move goods and raw products from northern Ontario down here. We're talking about a seamless transit here: moving people, moving goods and services.

In this Legislature, my count is that about a third of the members are from the GTA area. That's from all parties. Surely, on a non-partisan basis, the third of this Legislature that's from the GTA that sits in this body can get our heads together and work to develop a seamless transit system to move people and to move goods and services.

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this resolution. While we're here talking about how to improve transit links between municipalities to "enhance opportunities for employment" in the 905 belt, I assume some rural municipalities would be wondering when this government will be doing something further to enhance their opportunities. I support better organized transit links. In fact, I think it's a great idea, especially if they would go a step further and continue to link with many of our rural areas.

My feeling is there is a lack of understanding, certainly a lack of public transportation in my riding. In my view, this government has missed the bus as far as rural Ontario goes. Certainly in Norfolk county and Haldimand county in my riding, there is no bus. We did have a bus for a number of years that traveled along provincial Highway 3 coming out of Tillsonburg across to Simcoe and down to Port Dover. It caught up with provincial Highway 6, up through Jarvis, Hagersville, Caledonia and into Hamilton. That last remaining bus service hasn't existed for a number of years now.

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We were discussing the much-heralded gas tax that, obviously, our rural Ontarians pay with every fill-up. That, as we know, helps fund the public transit dreams of our urban neighbours. I will point out that in rural Ontario, certainly in my part of rural Ontario, public transit is a memory; it's not a dream. Little goes, obviously, to funding public transportation in rural municipalities. As we all know, OC Transpo out of Ottawa doesn't go as far as Winchester; the TTC does not go as far as Wingham. Of the three counties of my riding—Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk—Norfolk received nothing, Haldimand county received nothing. The only gas tax money to come our way was \$40,000 for Brant county. I suppose with \$40,000 you might be able to buy a used van, maybe

you could pay someone minimum wage to drive the van, and you could fill up the gas tank a bit. That would pretty well use up \$40,000.

My concern is that when this government was elected, they made a promise: They promised to tap into the potential of rural Ontario. I'm suggesting that tap is pretty well running dry, if you start looking at the kind of dollar figures or government support for rural Ontario with respect to this particular issue, the issue of public transit. I say this advisedly, but this bill does reflect a bit of an urban-centric agenda. It does focus on the 905 area. My concern is that there is an additional potential to ignore some of the unique issues in rural Ontario, transportation being one of them.

I think of this government's cavalier attitude, the proposal to take away the drivers' licences of young people with recent legislation introduced by the Minister of Education, to penalize young people for poor attendance in school. Again, in rural Ontario, Norfolk county, Haldimand county specifically, there is no other option. There is no bus; there is no TTC. If you take away a young person's licence, you have pretty well totally removed their transit options, other than calling a taxi, which can be very expensive, to have a taxi run out to a farm, for example, from town. You've removed that option in a business operation, a shop in the country or a farm where somebody has to drive that pickup truck into town to pick up parts or supplies. Especially during the upcoming planting season, a very intensive time where all hands have to be on deck, you do have to have someone with a driver's licence to go into town, especially when emergency repairs are called for.

You don't see this government removing these kinds of options for urban young people in that legislation, as I understand it. I'm sure that, for example, in our major cities, young people on occasion do have problems with attendance at school. I don't see a call to take away their TTC pass, for example, but the legislation seems more than willing to take away a young person's driver's licence. I'm suggesting there's a modicum of unfairness there.

With respect to this legislation, looking at the bigger picture, those of us who live in farm Ontario, rural Ontario, northern Ontario, essentially want to be back on the transit map where that is feasible. We are concerned that legislation like this can go the wrong way and continue to contribute to some of the damage that we have seen in the past two and a half years. Whether everyone has a driver's licence or not, we're seeing rural families, northern Ontario families, that are paying more than \$2,000 a year more, thanks in part to the McGuinty health tax, thanks in part to the ever-increasing cost of gasoline, of diesel, obviously of natural gas—of energy costs in general—and more specifically, as a result of the uncertainty of the policy from this government, of electricity.

Mr. Marchese: I'm going to read the resolution again, because I think it's particularly important. Mr. Delaney's resolution says, "That, in the opinion of this House, the

government of Ontario should continue and expand its initiatives and investment in public transit, especially in assisting the fast-growth municipalities in the '905 belt' around the city of Toronto to link with one another through new or better-organized public transit links between these municipalities to ease gridlock, enhance opportunities for employment, and reduce carbon emissions."

I'm going way out on a limb here, and I wouldn't want anybody to take any bets because this place is very volatile, but I wager to say there is not one member of this place who is opposed to it. Is that a fair assessment, do you think? With all due respect to the member, this is a very harmless little resolution here and I'm not quite sure why we're debating it. What I'd rather do is debate the following, and this is the Liberal promise:

"We will bring a region-wide approach to identifying and meeting GTA transit needs by creating the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority....

"The new GTTA will be given the clout and resources to tackle gridlock and ensure free movement of people and goods in a rapidly growing region."

That, monsieur Delaney, mon ami, is the Liberal promise that was made. Why didn't he introduce that promise as a resolution to be debated here today rather than the resolution he brings forward that says the government should do more on this and that? Do you understand what I'm saying, Mr. Delaney? You probably appreciate why people like me get irritated by stuff like this.

You see, when you make a promise such as the one I read, we should be debating where you are at with that promise. I remind you that you've got about a year and a half left. You ain't got much time. As my friend from Beaches-East York said, your budget is coming down in a month or a month and a half or so. He does not and I do not anticipate you're going to deal with that problemo. So I'm saying to you that you've got about a year and a half left to deal with your promise to create the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority, and you refuse to speak to the promise by introducing a useless, weak resolution that says nothing.

Mr. Delaney: Rosie, you've got to be nice.

Mr. Marchese: I did say, "With all due respect."

Rather than dealing with the downloading of transportation to the cities, which is literally desiccating most of the cities around Ontario—you understand "desiccating"; they're dry, really dry—rather than dealing with the downloading the Tories left us with, which you promised to deal with, rather than introducing that motion to be debated, you're here with something that gives us no satisfaction or pleasure by way of debate. You should be taking up the uploading of transportation so that municipalities could finally deal with their problems, or at least making sure that we get back to the old formula we had as New Democrats, and that former mayors here would probably know. The formula was 75% province, 25% cities, and 50% on capital.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): No, it was 50-50 on operations.

Mr. Marchese: Fifty per cent on operations—it's what New Democrats had when we were in power. The Tories eliminated that. You should deal with that because that's what cities need by way of provincial support, not a resolution that gives us absolutely no hope that we're ever going to deal with this, that gives the city of Toronto no hope that it can ever deal with its transportation woes, when my friend Michael Prue speaks about being behind by \$180 million less today than they were getting in 1994-95. That's what we've got to deal with.

So you can hide behind your 2% tax that is yet to come due, that is yet to be fulfilled, that has yet to come, and when it does come it will be by October. You can hide behind it, but cities are starving, Monsieur Delaney, for funds. They're waiting for the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority. They're waiting for that. It's your promise. Debate that in the next couple of minutes you've got. But please, don't bring me here for an hour to talk about something that says, "Yes, the province should do more," that should do this, should do that. They're not doing anything.

I hope that Monsieur Delaney in his two-minute response will speak to the Liberal promise that clearly we do not have before us, that clearly they're about to abandon and that clearly is not helping our cities.

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Mr. Arthurs: I appreciate the opportunity to spend a couple of minutes on this resolution. I'm pleased to stand in support of it.

I want to reflect, though, a little but on what we have been doing. I would suggest that we have a four-year mandate and that the GTTA is on track, that it's coming. It takes some time to work with the stakeholders.

Let me reminisce for a second. Back in the early 1990s, when there was an NDP government, I remember there was a steering committee—I can't remember what we called it. GO, the TTC and the abutting municipalities were all invited to the table. Lou Parsons actually chaired that. One of the things we put on the table was two cents for gas tax, but the government of the day said, "We can consider that but we'd have to raise the taxes on gas to do it," and that wasn't acceptable. So that initiative really didn't go anywhere because the government of the day wasn't prepared to address it on a go-forward basis and sharing to enhance the system.

Then the Tory government came into play and they created the Greater Toronto Services Board, the GTSB, and gave it primary responsibility for transportation and transit in the greater Toronto area, but they gave it no teeth, they gave it no capacity, they gave it no financial ability to do anything. What did they do at the end of the day? They gave up on it and pulled it back because they fumbled the ball so badly.

Our government in the interim has been working very hard over the past two years, making sure that all the stakeholders come to the table, making sure that when the minister comes forward with his proposal on the GTTA—whenever that is; it'll be in the mandate; it's one of our commitments—he will come to the table with

everyone on side, working together, paddling in the same direction as opposed to everyone paddling in different directions. I'm rather looking forward to the success our government is going to have on that initiative, as compared to what I've experienced with former governments over the past dozen or so years.

I'm also going to look forward to the balance of the two cents on gas tax that our government committed to and implemented almost immediately. It was October of 2003 or 2004—I can't remember when we back-dated it to, but we put that first cent in place and municipalities knew we were serious. We committed to staging it over the two-year time frame to allow it to ramp up. This October they'll get the final instalment, up to two cents a litre on gas—not a new tax but in the existing structure—to support public transit in the greater Toronto area and across the province where there is transit.

I'm very pleased with the resolution. I think it's a good resolution. I think it speaks to what the need is. The 905 regions around Toronto represent about 15% or 20% of the population of the province. We should be paying attention to that. We should be paying attention to its economic viability, to the capacity of people to move within that system, as well as to move in and out of the city of Toronto. There's a lot of work that still needs to be done, and at times we have to get the 905 regions on Hansard, because Lord only knows, we get enough of Toronto on Hansard from all members. So this is an opportunity for us to ensure that the vital needs of two-and-a-half million people get addressed as well.

I'm certainly looking forward to the minister and his timing, when he's ready and feels it's appropriate, in bringing forward the GTTA initiative within the context of what we promised in our campaign platform, and I'm certainly looking forward to the balance of the two cents a litre coming forward to assist and encourage municipalities.

In my own jurisdiction, my own home town in essence, most recently the region of Durham has got the message. They needed to work together to enhance transit within that jurisdiction, and took the disparate transit systems and created the Durham Region Transit system, to begin working more closely so they could work with their neighbours in York and Peel and Halton, as well as their neighbours in Toronto.

I'm very pleased to stand today in support of the resolution that the member from Mississauga West has brought forward and look forward to voting on it shortly.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): First of all, congratulations to Mr. Delaney for introducing ballot item number 20, to assist “the fast-growth municipalities in the ‘905 belt’ around the city of Toronto to link with one another through new or better-organized public transit links between these municipalities to ease gridlock.”

It's obvious that what we need here and what Mr. Delaney is asking for is a real paradigm shift, a shift to new priorities.

The NDP members today, as much as I normally like what they have to say, and I'm listening very carefully,

are simply too negative. You will remember the history of public transit. Remember what happened in 1996-97? Capital funding for transit was slashed from 75% to numero zero. Now, in 2005, Ottawa is getting \$200 million for public transit from the Liberal government; Toronto, the GTA, \$600 million. This is the Canada-Ontario, Ottawa infrastructure agreement.

What about the gas tax? The gas tax for Toronto, between 2005 and 2006, right now, is \$120 million. In short, since October 2003, Toronto received \$447 million for public transit. Now, you have to admit, that is certainly better than zero. That's the history we've come from.

It is obvious: Transportation, especially for the public—it is important that we realize this is not simply moving people around. If anyone has seen what takes place in some of these Asian cities like Bangkok—I know you've been there—or Manila—I know you've been there—it takes about two hours to travel half a kilometre on public highways. That's gridlock. We are doing better, but we certainly have to do much better than that.

As I said earlier, and Mr. Delaney's motion is speaking directly to it, we have to have a shift in priorities. We are counting on the NDP members who are here today to support this bill and to stop being Mr. Negative. We have shifted our budget from zero to all these millions of dollars and we are counting on your support. Support this bill. Don't sit here and just be negative and sit on your hands and say, “Oh, this is useless because we can't get this bill from the backbenches to the front benches of the Liberal Party.” This, as you know, is not correct. You know better than that. We are counting on you. We're counting on your support. Stand up and be counted, be positive and help Mr. Delaney. Get up every day in the Legislature and help so that the Minister of Transportation can make his case.

Mr. Marchese: Shameless, shameless.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ruprecht: And especially you, Mr. Rosario Marchese. You have a special responsibility on your shoulder, because your riding is in the middle of Toronto, and consequently we are counting on you to support this bill.

Interjection.

Mr. Ruprecht: Yes, that's true. The whole point is simply this: From 75% to zero does not speak well of a seamless public transportation system.

Mr. Marchese: What does it speak to?

Mr. Ruprecht: This is what Mr. Delaney's bill speaks of directly: a seamless transportation system that will stop the gridlock in Ontario.

In addition to that, it's not only the gridlock in Ontario; it will produce employment opportunities and reduce carbon emissions, which you said earlier you agree with. Stand up and be counted.

Mr. Marchese: Shameless, shameless.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Trinity-Spadina will come to order.

Mr. Ruprecht: We support you; you support us in this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: I really shouldn't have to ask members like the member for Trinity–Spadina to come to order as often as I do. This is private members' business. We're here to listen to what each other has to say. It becomes more difficult when there is that much commotion in the House.

Mr. Delaney, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Delaney: Thank you very much, Speaker. It will take almost the whole—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Trinity–Spadina, I have asked you to come to order, please. Mr. Delaney.

Mr. Delaney: I'd like to thank the eight members who spoke knowledgeably and certainly passionately about this resolution: the members for Oxford, Beaches–East York, Niagara Falls, Willowdale, Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant, Trinity–Spadina, Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge and Davenport. I note that the member for Oxford recognized his two- to two-and-a-half-hour commute to get to Queen's Park; and his seatmate, my good friend the member for Durham—who, I might add, is an excellent hockey player—suggested raising taxes, and gosh, this is just not a tax-cut-and-borrow government.

Some \$10 million of the 2005 gas tax went to rural municipalities, and some \$12 million in 2005–06 of the gas tax went to rural municipalities, just to put that into some perspective.

The member for Beaches–East York says, essentially, "Show me the money." Beginning last year, Ontario has invested \$1.4 billion in gas tax funding to benefit 83 transit systems serving 110 municipalities. This year's amount is \$232 million, up from \$156 million last year and up from a total of zero when the former government cut support for transit systems in 1996–97.

Thank you very much for the time to discuss this resolution this morning.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: There must have been something in the Wheaties this morning, I think.

The time provided for private members' business has expired.

NOWRUZ DAY ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR LE JOUR NOWRUZ

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We will first deal with ballot item number 19.

Mr. Racco has moved second reading of Bill 63, An Act to proclaim Nowruz Day. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): Mr. Speaker, I would like to send Bill 63 to the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Racco has asked that the bill be sent to the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly. Agreed? Agreed.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We shall now deal with ballot item number 20, that being private members' notice of motion number 8, standing in the name of Mr. Delaney. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. It is carried.

All matters relating to public members' private business having been dealt with, I do now leave the chair. The House will resume at 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1203 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

VOLUNTEERS

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): A few weeks ago, Lieutenant Governor and fellow Muskokan James K. Bartleman recognized the contributions of Orvil K. Hammond of Bracebridge. Orvil Hammond has funded breakfast programs at two local schools as well as contributing to the installation of an elevator at the Bracebridge Memorial Community Centre, enabling wheelchair accessibility at the centre.

Mr. Hammond was among 38 Ontarians who received the Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship in a ceremony held here at Queen's Park, which recognizes good citizenship and outstanding public contributions through exceptional long-term efforts. In a career spanning over 60 years, Orvil Hammond has progressed from humble beginnings to being a very successful businessman. Over that time, he has always helped our community and his employees in many thoughtful ways. Congratulations, Orv.

I'm also very happy to recognize the efforts of more than 80 Harvest Share volunteers from the Parry Sound area. This program is dedicated to improving accessibility to good quality, affordable and nutritious food. Harvest Share also promotes recycling in all of its programs. I would like to recognize Tim Vankoughnett, who has contributed 208 volunteer hours and counting, and Roswitha Promberger, who has been with the organization from the beginning. Other volunteers include: Steven Burnside, who has given 1,053 hours; Joan Burnside, giving 932 hours; and Karen Allen, with 739 hours. Their hours of effort and those of fellow volunteers is remarkable and deserving of recognition. On behalf of the many people in Parry Sound–Muskoka who benefit from their efforts, I extend my heartfelt thanks and congratulations.

CANADIAN WOMEN'S HOCKEY TEAM

Mr. Tony C. Wong (Markham): It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to congratulate three

women hockey heroes who struck gold this week at the winter Olympics in Torino. Kudos to Gillian Apps of Unionville, Cherie Piper of Markham and Gillian Ferrari of Thornhill, members of the Canadian women's hockey team that defeated Sweden 4-1 in the final. Your gold medal win is a shining example that through skill, determination, teamwork and a true Canadian attitude dreams really do come true.

I'm particularly proud of these young women because they serve as a role model for youth, particularly girls, to engage in physical activity and sports. The McGuinty government is helping Ontario youth lead stronger and healthier lives through a vehicle called the Active 2010 communities in action fund, or CIAF. Recently, the Markham Skating Club received a one-year grant worth over \$8,000 from CIAF. These funds will support an outreach and membership development project to engage new residents of Markham in recreational skating.

Living in one of Canada's most culturally diverse communities, many new residents of Markham may have had little experience participating in skating as a form of physical activity and recreation. Through this project, the Markham Skating Club will engage and encourage 400 new children and youth residents to skate. As our Minister of Health Promotion has said, organizations like these play a critical role in this government's strategy to help Ontarians develop healthier and more active lifestyles.

Please join me in congratulating Gillian Apps, Cherie Piper and Gillian Ferrari on their tremendous win.

OMERS PENSION PLAN

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): Our leader, John Tory, has been urging both Premier McGuinty and CUPE's Sid Ryan to let cooler heads prevail and return to the negotiating table. Before I go further, I want to thank the Premier for taking the advice of the leader of the official opposition at the 11th hour and averting a strike that would have crippled this province.

Premier, I still don't understand why the government is ignoring AMO's request to see the province's estimates on the total cost of the OMERS reform. AMO has every reason to be concerned with changes you are making to this multi-billion dollar pension plan. I would expect that, on a matter of this importance, you would want to share your numbers with AMO or, as scary as it may be, Premier, is it that you really don't know what the financial impact is going to be to the taxpayers of the province of Ontario?

I'm very concerned with Bill 206—a bill that was amended over 100 times, a bill that is not at all the same as it was the day it was first introduced. The amendments that were made to this bill do nothing to address the concerns brought forward by the many presenters during the committee hearings. In fact, some went so far as to say that if the government was going to put forward what is believed to be a flawed governance model, then, frankly, it would be better that the government leave things the way they were.

The province is rushing to reform one of Canada's most important pension funds, without a reasonable understanding of the potential repercussions and without sufficient regard to the best interests of employees, retirees, employers and, most importantly, taxpayers, because that's where all of this OMERS money comes from.

Once again, I ask the Premier to recognize that the taxpayers of Ontario should not bear the undue financial burdens this bill could impose upon them.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Let me tell you what hard-working folks in the whole area of health care delivery have to say about the government's misguided, ill-conceived and downright boneheaded LHINs proposal.

Liz LeMesurier, from Deere Street in Welland, and Gerry Fortier write to me:

"Dear Mr. Kormos

"As a health care worker and a voter I am concerned that the Ontario government is radically restructuring our health care system without any consultation with the public and health care workers.

"Bill 36 will create 14 local health integration networks that will decide the health care Ontarians will get.

"LHINs will have the power to shut down local health services or transfer them to other locations.

"Our communities will lose health services. Health care workers will lose jobs.

"LHINs will have the power to transfer public health services to for-profit companies through a competitive bidding process.

"LHINs are not local and undemocratic.

"All this has caused me"—the authors of this letter—"deep concern. These changes will negatively impact patient care, our communities and hospital workers' jobs."

These health workers, along with millions of Ontarians, know that this government, hell-bent on the privatization of health care with Bill 36, its LHINs policy, is dooming the future of health care in the province of Ontario. I join with them in telling this government to stop and terminate Bill 36.

YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS CONFERENCE

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): I'm delighted to share my enjoyment in attending the opening ceremonies for the Young Entrepreneurs conference held yesterday at Mohawk College. The conference is designed to provide a forum for young people to understand the impact of entrepreneurship on the economy. A teacher asked, "Who has cut grass or babysat for money?" and then made the connection between these activities as defining the start of entrepreneurship. The majority of companies are started by one person—one person with an idea and a dream.

Entrepreneurs are the backbone of business. My thanks go to all the teachers who are encouraging young people to explore these options. Thank you to Reid McWilliams from Mohawk College, who, along with Kristin Huigenbos, coordinator of the Small Business Enterprise Centre of the city of Hamilton, organized this very successful conference.

The Ministry of Economic Development and Trade has two wonderful programs for students, Summer Company and Youth Partnerships, which offer great opportunities for students to test their interest in small business by giving them mentoring and hands-on business experience.

Entrepreneurs are a hard-working, dedicated group of citizens who combine energy, tenaciousness and creativity to build successful businesses, develop job opportunities and support communities.

Congratulations to the Small Business Enterprise Centre for their initiative in offering this conference at Mohawk College, and to all the young people who brought their enthusiasm for entrepreneurship and attended and celebrated and cheered.

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): I want to address a very serious problem threatening both the commercial and sports fisheries in the St. Lawrence and Thousand Islands region that the Minister of Natural Resources to date is ignoring.

The double-crested cormorant moved into the region a number of years ago in the wake of another invasive species, the zebra mussel. Cormorants are clear-water fishers, and the presence of zebra mussels has dramatically reduced turbidity and made the river an attractive hunting zone for this invasive species.

New York state's Department of Environmental Conservation along with the US Fish and Wildlife Service have made efforts to control the cormorant population on the US side of the river, but their efforts are not achieving the desired goal, because Ontario officials continue to sit on their hands.

New York State Senator Jim Wright, along with Tom Nichols, chair of the St. Lawrence County Legislature, have called on the Ontario government, through the Ministry of Natural Resources, to work co-operatively with US agencies to address this growing problem before irreversible losses occur.

I urge the Minister of Natural Resources to get engaged and stop taking a pass on efforts to address this dramatic situation. Significant damage to fish populations is occurring and the time to act is long overdue.

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SPEED SKATING OVAL

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I'm pleased to rise in the House today to speak about the Ontario Speed Skating Oval. Earlier this month, I had the honour of

announcing an investment of more than \$800,000 by this government toward the construction of an innovative facility in the town of Lakefield just outside of Peterborough.

The speed skating oval in Lakefield will be Ontario's only temperature-controlled, outdoor 400-metre speed skating oval, complete with an adjoining multipurpose building. A key element of this project is the geothermal heat pump system. This means that excess heat will be captured for use as a heat source for the oval buildings, two local high schools and a subdivision in the area.

This announcement is about community partnership, about partners working together to provide the best solutions to build a stronger, healthier Lakefield.

I wish to recognize the efforts of those committed partners who were instrumental in bringing this project forward: Mr. Graham Wilkins, Mr. Norm Kyle, Mr. Rick Morrison, Mr. Mark Graham, Mr. Bob Helsing and Mr. Allan Heritage. And a special thanks to Catriona Le May Doan, who has graciously agreed to be the honorary spokesperson for this project.

The McGuinty government is delivering results in Lakefield and communities across Ontario through the rural economic development program. It is expected that the Ontario Speed Skating Oval facilities in Lakefield will be used by more than 80,000 people annually. This project will provide more than 180 new jobs in the community and has the potential to generate more than \$6 million in new tourism for Ontario. Congratulations to everyone involved.

DON VALLEY WEST CONSERVATION FAIR

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I'm happy to report today on the Don Valley West Conservation Fair that I hosted at Don Mills Plaza this past Saturday. I'm proud to report that over 200 residents came to take a look and learn from the displays set up by 17 exhibitors on a range of conservation issues.

We had small business people, not-for-profit citizens' organizations and school-based programs all demonstrating their leadership and sincere interest in making a smaller ecological footprint in our society.

I want to thank Citizens' Environment Watch, Earth Rangers Centre, Enbridge, GreenSaver, Next Energy, Nulight Ltd., Toronto Hydro, the Don Valley West One-Tonne Challenge, Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy, Evergreen, EnerWorks, North Toronto Green Community, FIRSTeam, EcoSchools, New Currents and Recycling Streams.

While residents learned how they could draft-proof their homes, switch to compact fluorescent light bulbs and teach their children to reduce, reuse and recycle, they also learned of the additional benefit resulting in reducing their energy costs. As I spoke with many of the people in the mall, I appreciated just how much they

were interested in this issue, are already aware about energy issues and want to do more.

This event is just one example of how we can foster a culture of conservation. I'm pleased to say that the residents of Don Valley West care deeply about how conservation plays a significant role in environmental responsibility.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): Rather than dwell on the myths that have been circulating about local health integration networks, I'd like to clarify the purpose of Bill 36: to deliver a more transparent, regionally accountable, truly integrated health care system for the people of Ontario.

Let's pause for a moment to consider the state of that system. What we inherited were the remnants of a system neglected to the point of implosion. The Tories closed hospitals, fired thousands of nurses and ran up a massive deficit in the process. We had a choice: to accept the consequences of the Tories' slash-and-burn health care policy or to roll up our sleeves and deliver a reformed health care system that is more accountable and responsive to the needs of patients. Needless to say, we chose the latter.

Today we are delivering on that promise. LHINs represent a fundamental shift in Ontario health care. We are taking a loose cluster of services and turning them into a truly integrated system, a system that will be responsive to specific local health care needs.

I do worry about the dangerous games some groups are playing with our health care system. Those who would spread misinformation and seek to derail our reforms are taking grave risks with the health of Ontarians. I would call on all stakeholders and members of the House to join us in focusing Ontario's health care system where it properly belongs: on patients.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (CELLULAR PHONES), 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (TÉLÉPHONES CELLULAIRES)

Mr. O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 68, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit the use of phones and other equipment while a person is driving on a highway / Projet de loi 68, Loi modifiant le Code de la route pour interdire l'utilisation de téléphones et d'autres équipements pendant qu'une personne conduit sur une voie publique.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): The intention of this bill, of course, is to change drivers' behaviour, to address the issue of driver distraction, to improve the statistics with respect to the relationship between technology and potential accidents and to require drivers to cease using phones in certain situations. But the key thing to this piece of legislation is quite practical: It's to do the right thing. If it saves one life, it does the right thing.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following change be made to the ballot list of private members' public business: Mr. Dunlop and Mr. O'Toole exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Dunlop assumes ballot item 40 and Mr. O'Toole assumes ballot item 22; Mr. Hardeman and Mr. Klees exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Hardeman assumes ballot item 47 and Mr. Klees assumes ballot item 23.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

DEFERRED VOTES

ONTARIO MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES RETIREMENT SYSTEM ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR LE RÉGIME DE RETRAITE DES EMPLOYÉS MUNICIPAUX DE L'ONTARIO

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 206, An Act to revise the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System Act / Projet de loi 206, Loi révisant la Loi sur le régime de retraite des employés municipaux de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1349 to 1354.

The Speaker: All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bountrogianni, Marie
Bradley, James J.
Brownell, Jim
Bryant, Michael
Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Chambers, Mary Anne V.
Colle, Mike
Craitor, Kim
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Duguid, Brad

Duncan, Dwight
Gerretsen, John
Hoy, Pat
Jeffrey, Linda
Kular, Kuldip
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Marsales, Judy
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McGuinty, Dalton
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol

Oraziotti, David
Parsons, Ernie
Patten, Richard
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Racco, Mario G.
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Smith, Monique
Van Bommel, Maria
Watson, Jim
Wilkinson, John
Wong, Tony C.
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Amott, Ted
Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles
Chudleigh, Ted
Hampton, Howard
Hardeman, Ernie
Horwath, Andrea
Hudak, Tim

Klees, Frank
Kormos, Peter
Marchese, Rosario
Martel, Shelley
Martiniuk, Gerry
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
O'Toole, John

Prue, Michael
Runciman, Robert W.
Scott, Laurie
Sterling, Norman W.
Tory, John
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 51; the nays are 23.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

ORAL QUESTIONS**LOCAL HEALTH
INTEGRATION NETWORKS**

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. I wonder if the Premier could explain to the House why his government has found it necessary to provide the Minister of Health with more power than any Minister of Health in recent memory. I am referring specifically to the power that is given in the LHIN bill to allow the minister to ride roughshod over the LHIN accountability agreements whenever he chooses to do so. I wonder if the Premier could explain why that power is necessary if your priority is on giving the power to make these decisions to the local level?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'm pleased to take the question. In any discussion about LHINs, I would ask the leader of the official opposition, as I would Ontarians, to consider our track record to date with respect to health care generally and medicare specifically, and the tremendous commitment we have demonstrated in that regard. We are the first province to put in place a specific piece of legislation, the Commitment to the Future of Medicare

Act, which effectively enshrines national legislation at the provincial level.

The LHIN undertaking, which we are putting forward on behalf of the people of Ontario, is all about ensuring that Ontarians have more say in their community when it comes to the delivery of good-quality health care. What it does, in a real sense, is give more control, more determination to people at the community level, and we think that's healthy and appropriate.

Mr. Tory: Let's talk about that, because, as with so many things, it's a matter of whether it's real or a mirage. In fact, you used different language the other day. You said that you had every confidence in the people to assist when it comes to making important decisions.

What you've done is put a section in this bill that, without a hearing, without cabinet oversight or approval, without having to meet any definition at all of what is in the public interest, the minister can override the accountability agreement between the LHINs and himself at the end of a negotiating process that hasn't succeeded, effectively rendering them—his hand-picked appointees, by the way—powerless to be involved in the decision.

1400

Worse than that, this overriding that he can do, totally trampling on any involvement by the local people, will take place in secret, in darkness. That means the public will never know that the minister overrode what the local people wanted to do.

So I ask you, Premier: If this is really about local input, local decision-making, local involvement, why are you allowing your minister to become some sort of a politburo where he gets to make the decisions himself in secret? Why are you doing that?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again the leader of the official opposition is sorely mistaken in this regard. Our made-in-Ontario model will empower local communities to make decisions about local health care. We just don't believe—and I'm surprised to hear the leader of the official opposition assert something to the contrary—that you can micromanage the entire health care system from an office tower within the precinct of Queen's Park.

Right now, Ontario is the only jurisdiction in Canada with no local say over health care needs. On behalf of all those people who have signed on to serve on LHIN boards, I resent that somehow these people have been chosen for reasons other than their ability and their goodwill and their determination to improve the quality of care at the local level.

Mr. Tory: Premier, of course, you have basically substituted those hand-picked appointees of yours for good people who signed up before to serve on local hospital boards, where they will have no role to play anymore. But even the hand-picked people you put in place are going to be overridden by the minister. If you've read the bill, check out subsection 18(3), which says that the minister can override any of these decisions that your hand-picked people will make in any event.

We moved an amendment that would have strengthened your argument about local representation and

power. We said that there should be a dispute resolution mechanism set up so that if the minister and the LHIN can't agree, he doesn't just get the power to go to a secret room and decide by himself; somebody else gets to take a look at it. You voted that down.

If you're serious about what you said and making sure local people have a say in local health care matters, why won't you reconsider that? Why did you vote that down? Why are you centralizing all the micromanagement precisely with your Minister of Health? Because that's what you're doing.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, the leader of the official opposition may be suffering from the perspective that comes from not being here when his party formed the government. He probably does not remember, and perhaps he would not like to recall, the Savings and Restructuring Act of 1995, which paved the way for closing 28 Ontario hospitals. There was no local input at that time. That was the approach brought by that government at that time.

On the contrary, over here we have put in place long-term funding for all Ontario hospitals. We have also said that we have faith in local communities. That is the foundation on which we will build this new LHIN concept. It's about ensuring that the people of Ontario have greater access, greater say in their communities over the quality of health care that's going to be delivered in their communities. It's based on our belief that you can trust the people in Ontario communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): New question, the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: My question is to the Premier. I'm not sure whether he said you can or can't trust the people, because, with all this power being given to the minister, there's no way you trust the local people. You're giving all the power to him to open and close and amalgamate and cut off services—unprecedented powers.

Let's go to section 30 of the bill. We talked about this the other day. Your minister can, by ministerial order—no court hearing, no oversight by cabinet, no nothing—transfer a charitable donation, given by a citizen in good faith to a hospital, somewhere completely different. So if he uses his power in the act, section 28, to close a hospital arbitrarily, which he can do, he can then take a charitable gift and simply transfer that to some other community.

If you really believe in local power for these things, if you really believe in encouraging people to give to the hospitals, why would you create a power in the minister to transfer a charitable donation anywhere he wants—no cabinet oversight, no court approval? Why would you do that?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I know that the Tories tried to manufacture an issue with this particular section of the bill. They asked the OHA about this section in the standing committee, and the OHA replied that they didn't share the Tories' concern. Just so we're clear.

Apparently they're not going to allow the facts to get in the way of the adventure which they are pursuing. We

have written sensible legislation. Only property that is directly tied to the integration can be directed to move. Charitable property can only be moved to another charity, just so we're clear in that regard. And if someone has made a charitable gift for a specific purpose, the property, if moved, must be used for the very same purpose.

Mr. Tory: Let's talk about that, because it also applies to the closure of a hospital, and in the event, under an integration order—

Interjections.

Mr. Tory: Yes, it does. In the event your minister decides to close a hospital in a community—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. Order. Minister of Community and Social Services, Minister of Finance, I'm having difficulty hearing the Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: In the event that you didn't intend to give the minister power to close hospitals under the integration order section, then you wouldn't have given it to him, and it's right there. If he chose to close the sole hospital in a town, then yes, I agree, the property does have to be transferred to another charitable foundation. It could be transferred to a foundation 500 miles away.

This process is presently governed by the courts. Presently, you have to go to court to make an application to transfer it. Why would you give the minister unprecedented, unfettered, unqualified power to transfer things right out of a community if he closed a hospital, no say from anybody else, no consultation with the donor? Why would you do that? You talked a lot the other day about amendments that you listened to that are reasonable. Why would you bull ahead with this if you never intended to use the power and transfer people's gifts from one community to another regardless of what they wanted?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, I think it's really important to understand the foundation on which the leader of the official opposition is launching this attack. He is the representative of a government that closed 28 hospitals, the representative of a government that spent \$400 million to fire thousands of nurses and compared them to hula hoop workers. He is the representative of a party which now is saying that, given the opportunity, the first thing they would do for Ontario health care is to reach in and remove \$2.4 billion.

I would again ask Ontarians to compare and contrast. We've increased funding for Ontario health care by 19%. We are the first government in the history of this province to have put in place three-year funding so hospitals can plan long into the future. And we are the first government in Ontario that said we have faith in Ontario communities to better manage their own affairs when it comes to the delivery of quality health care.

Mr. Tory: Of course, all of that has nothing to do with the question at hand, the transfer of charitable property, absolutely nothing.

I would ask you this simple—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. We need to be quiet so that I can hear the Leader of the Opposition ask his question. It's not helpful when we decide to assist him early on.

Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: Or later on, Mr. Speaker, if I might add, but never mind.

Premier, if you really mean all of what you have just said about local control, if you really mean that you don't intend to do the things that you are implying you are not going to do, why is it necessary in this bill to give the minister unfettered power to close hospitals, to withdraw services from hospitals, to move charitable property? If you weren't intending to use these powers, why would you create them to begin with, or why wouldn't you have some check and balance on them, whether it's cabinet oversight or court oversight or something like that? Why do you need these powers in this bill—unprecedented recent powers—if you're not going to use them? Why are they there?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: You would think, if there were any merit whatsoever to the argument being made by the leader of the official opposition, that the Ontario Hospital Association would want to register their concerns with us. But they do not share the concerns put forward by the leader of the official opposition. Those are the people who are on the front lines, those are the people who assume the very important and special responsibility to deliver good-quality care inside our Ontario hospitals, and they have said that they are not concerned by this provision. So I will leave it to the people of Ontario to make their decision as to whom they are going to attach credibility to when it comes to this issue: the leader of the official opposition, who is doing so on a partisan basis, or those people who run our hospitals and who have told us they're not concerned about those provisions.

1410

The Speaker: New question, the leader of the third party.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is to the Premier and it's about local democracy. Premier, you say that your local health integration network, or LHIN boards, and the bill will mean local control of our health care system. That should mean that local communities will have some say over who sits on the LHIN board. Can you tell the people of Ontario how many LHIN board members will be elected by local communities? Will they all be elected by local communities? Will a majority be elected by local communities? How many LHIN board members will be elected by local communities under the McGuinty government scheme?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, the leader of the NDP is very much opposed to reform of any kind when it comes to improving the quality of health care we deliver in the province of Ontario. He is adamantly opposed to the very concept of giving more control to our communities when it comes to the delivery of health care therein.

Understand what we've inherited here: 154 hospitals, 581 long-term-care homes, 42 community care access

centres, 37 public health units, 55 community health centres, 16 district health councils, seven ministry regional offices, 350 mental health programs, five academic health sciences centres, all with different geographies, different funding flows and overlapping accountability. We think that we can do better. The answer for us is to put in place our local health integration networks, which ensure that communities can bring all those services together.

Mr. Hampton: What a surprise, the Premier wouldn't answer the question. The answer is, under the McGuinty government, zero members of the LHINs boards will be elected by the people. All of the LHINs board members will be hand-picked and politically appointed by the McGuinty government. You know, it's very strange—100% of MPs are elected by the people, 100% of MPPs are elected by the people, 100% of municipal councillors and school board trustees are elected by the people. The McGuinty government calls this local health care control, but none of the board members are elected by the people; they're all politically hand-picked and appointed by you.

Premier, how can you have the gall to call this local control over health care when none of the board members will be locally elected; they'll all be political appointments by you?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The leader of the NDP likes to play fast and loose with the reputations of those people in Ontario who have stepped up to the plate and decided that they would put their shoulder behind the wheel of an important aspect of health care reform in our province. The leader of the NDP may not have confidence in those people who have decided they're going to help in this particular undertaking, but we are very pleased that people have taken on this responsibility on behalf of their community, and we have every confidence that they will do the work that is necessary to ensure that we better integrate services at the community level with the net result being better-quality services for people in Ontario communities.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, I just think you should be honest with people. Don't call this local control over health care when none of the board members are going to be elected locally. All of them are going to be appointed politically by you. Don't call that local control.

Now, you may think it's a good idea to have hand-picked McGuinty government appointments in charge of a \$21-billion health care budget, but New Democrats believe we should listen to some of the front-line health care experts like the Ontario Nurses' Association, who said, "It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the LHINs are simply an additional layer of bureaucracy under the substantive control of the health ministry."

I ask you again, Premier: How can you call this local control, when none of the LHINs board members will be elected by local communities? They'll all be centrally appointed, politically hand-picked and appointed by Dalton McGuinty.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again I part company with the leader of the NDP when he, in a broad-brush fashion,

disparages all those Ontarians who have agreed to participate in this very important reform. Fundamentally, it's about better integrating services that are already there in the community, bringing them together in a way that makes it more patient-friendly. That's what this is all about. It's about improving the quality of health care for Ontarians. So it may be that the leader of the NDP is not supportive of the individuals who have come forward and decided to act on behalf of their community, in the best interests of their community, but obviously I cannot agree with him in that regard.

The Speaker: New question?

Mr. Hampton: To the Premier: Despite all the Premier's words, he must admit it's very strange that none of these board members is going to be elected by local people.

I want to raise why it's so important to have local control. Yesterday I raised with you the LHINs bill's privatization clause, section 33, which gives the health minister the unprecedented draconian power to order the privatization of key health services like food delivery and cleaning services. It's a plan that the registered nurses call "disastrous for patients." Premier, how can you justify giving all control to Queen's Park-appointed LHINs board members, bureaucratic shields for your decisions, instead of giving control to working families in local communities who should be making the decisions about local health care?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The fiction that is being put forward on a regular basis now by the leader of the NDP is that LHINs are somehow a plot to introduce more private health care in the province of Ontario, and this, of course, from a member of a former NDP government that brought private ancillary services to the St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital in 1993, to the Trillium Health Centre in 1994, to the Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital in 1991, and to the Halton health care centre in 1992, just so we're clear.

On the other hand, we were very proud, on behalf of the people of Ontario, to put into place the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, which effectively enshrines national legislation at the provincial level. Therein lies the contrast.

Mr. Hampton: This is about why local control is important. You're going to give your Minister of Health the capacity to privatize all kinds of hospital services. I think local people ought to have a say in that before he orders that from his office in downtown Toronto.

Here's another reason why local communities deserve a real say: You, Premier, are giving LHINs the power to merge, to transfer, to amalgamate and to wind up health services in a local community. In my part of the province, the LHIN is the size of Spain. If the LHIN in my part of the province amalgamates services, people who are ill may have to travel great distances just to access services that used to be available in the local community. I think before the Minister of Health does that from his office in downtown Toronto, local people deserve to have a say in that. What do you think, Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I think it's wrong to frighten your constituents in that way. I would ask all Ontarians to take a look at the record we've amassed so far. We've raised spending in health care by 19%. We will build a new medical school. We're expanding medical school spaces. We're funding more than 3,000 new positions for nurses. We're putting into place family health teams. And yes, we are moving ahead with LHINs. That is part and parcel of our unwavering commitment to both medicare and to improving the quality of care we're delivering to the people of Ontario. So the leader of the NDP can say whatever he wants, but I would ask Ontarians to keep in mind our track record and our devotion to their cause, and in particular, to their right to better quality health care.

1420

Mr. Hampton: Premier, you seem to have real difficulty answering the questions today. Here's one more reason why local control is important: The LHINs will be able to use cutthroat bidding to pick who delivers health services, just like we now have in home care. It becomes not a question of who can deliver better care but who will deliver it for a rock-bottom price. We think that local communities deserve a say in these matters. They deserve a say in the quality of health care that happens in their community.

In committee we put forward an amendment to make sure that LHIN board members are elected by local communities, not appointed by the McGuinty government at Queen's Park. Today I'm asking you this question: Are you opposed to that amendment?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, the leader of the NDP sees any aspect of this legislation with which he disagrees as being part of a plot to introduce privatization. I think it's important for the leader of the NDP and for Ontarians to understand the nature of the bill itself, and in particular I want to quote from the preamble. The very first provision in the bill itself reads as follows: "The people of Ontario and their government ... confirm their enduring commitment to the principles of public administration, comprehensiveness, universality, portability, accessibility and accountability as provided in the Canada Health Act ... and the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004." It goes on to say: "The people of Ontario and their government ... are committed to the promotion of the delivery of public health services by not-for-profit organizations."

These are the very first provisions in the bill. They speak volumes about the spirit that informs this bill and our commitment to better-quality health care for Ontarians under the auspices of the Medicare Act.

The Speaker: New question. The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: My question is to the Premier, carrying on with the LHINs. It also talks in there a lot about local decision-making. My question is very simple. Paragraph 28(1)1 says that after receiving advice from the LHINs, the minister can issue an order to cause a hospital "to cease operating, to dissolve or to wind up its operations."

That power does not exist in the law today. If you don't intend to use it, why are you putting in the bill an express power, just with the advice of your hand-picked appointees—because they are that—why are you putting in the bill the power of the minister to issue an order causing a hospital to cease operating, dissolve or wind up its operations? Why do you need the power if you're not going to use it?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: If the leader of the official opposition maintains that the power is not there at present, then how did they close 28 hospitals in Ontario? Again, they closed hospitals.

We are strengthening Ontario hospitals. We're increasing their funding levels right across the board. We've increased funding levels generally for health care by 19%. We have given hospitals something they've been looking for for a long time now, which is a three-year funding commitment so they know exactly where they stand in that regard, to better manage their accounts and the care they deliver.

Again, I would ask the leader of the official opposition to cut us just a little bit of slack in this regard, and I'd ask Ontarians to carefully consider our approach to their hospitals and their health care and contrast that with the leader of the official opposition's party when they were in government.

Mr. Tory: There is not, in the law today—check it out—in the Public Hospitals Act, any power to order a hospital closed. There is not that power. There isn't the power, as well, to order charitable property given by citizens of Ontario to their hospital to be transferred somewhere else.

I'll repeat my question on both. If you don't intend to use the power to close a hospital down, if you don't intend to take someone's gift to a hospital and transfer it somewhere else, then why are you now creating these powers for yourself when they didn't exist before? Why are you doing it if you're not going to use the powers?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The leader of the official opposition is now arguing that the power, in fact, does not exist. Yet they closed 28 hospitals, which begs the question: Did they close those illegally? I think that's the question it raises.

If there is any group of people in this province who are concerned about a potential hospital closure, they are found within the Ontario Hospital Association. They have told us they do not have concerns in this regard. We will work with the Ontario Hospital Association, but more importantly, we will work with Ontarians to ensure that this LHINs bill and ultimately the legislation, should it be passed by this House, in fact improve the quality of health care that we deliver inside Ontario communities.

Mr. Tory: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'll be filing the appropriate papers to indicate my dissatisfaction—

The Speaker: Thank you. It's not necessary—
Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. New question.

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Premier. Municipalities across the province are being forced to hike property taxes because your government will not upload the download and you will, therefore, not pay your bills. St. Catharines is facing an 11% increase, Peterborough is looking at 12%, Hamilton is looking at nearly 8%, and Toronto has said that unless you come across with money, they're looking at 6% or more. Why are cash-strapped municipalities being forced to pay the bills that you have admitted are the province's responsibility?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I appreciate the question that has been asked. Let me say very quickly that this government has done an awful lot in the last two years to try to deal with the disastrous effects that the previous government dealt with with municipalities. When you look at the area of affordable housing, for example, we have committed over \$300 million of provincial taxpayers' dollars, together with the federal taxpayers, to come up with an affordable housing program across this province that will deliver 15,000 new affordable housing units, plus another 5,000 units of affordable housing that will actually be built and occupied by low-income individuals. We've helped with the gas tax. Just about right now, 1.5 cents of every dollar of gas that is being sold goes to municipalities. If memory serves me correctly, the number is well over \$300 million that municipalities are getting. We're working with municipalities—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. There may be a supplementary.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): You should try uploading the question.

Mr. Prue: Yes, I should try uploading and perhaps you should too because my question is not about how much money you're spending on housing, which is a provincial responsibility, it's how much you are giving to the cash-strapped municipalities.

You continue to require them across the province to fund provincially mandated programs off their limited budget base, something you vehemently opposed when you sat on this side of the House. With property taxes soaring across the province, municipalities can't afford any longer to shoulder your broken promises. When are you going to pay your own bills? When are you going to stop forcing them to pay them for you?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: Perhaps it's unfortunate that this member did not have the opportunity, or maybe he was at the ROMA conference earlier this week, where the ROMA delegates applauded the fact that we are working with municipalities to deal with the land ambulance situation. The Premier, as a matter of fact, made a commitment that within two years there will be true 50-50 funding. They also applauded the fact that this year,

under the Ontario municipal partnership fund, an additional \$51 million is being given to municipalities across this province, making a grand total of \$707 million to make sure no municipality will receive fewer dollars than they received last year. We are working with our municipalities. There is a lot of work to be done, but an awful lot of work has already been done. We want to make sure that each and every municipality in this province is viable and vibrant, because a good municipal world makes for a good Ontario.

1430

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): My question is for the Premier. Last year, this government announced our Reaching Higher plan. As part of that plan, we spoke about investing in additional training in our colleges and universities to improve the quality and accessibility of our schools. Two weeks ago, I was privileged to be at Nipissing University in North Bay and Canadore College which, as you know when you visited, are co-located. I was there with President Dennis Mock of Nipissing University and President Barbara Taylor of Canadore College, and we announced an investment of \$2.3 million to those fine institutions to improve education there.

Premier, can you discuss with us today the impacts of these investments and others across the province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I am pleased to receive the question from the member and to learn more about some of the good work that is being done in our post-secondary institutions and training centres by all those who are committed to improving the quality of skills and education of the people of Ontario. In that regard, I am very pleased to be co-hosting, together with Premier Charest, the first-ever national summit on post-secondary education and skills training this evening and all day tomorrow in Ottawa.

Ontario families know of our determination and commitment to improve education and training opportunities for them. Our \$6.2-billion investment is the largest in a generation. I am proud to say that a quarter of that, about \$1.5 billion, is devoted exclusively to improved student assistance. What we are going to do by way of this plan, which I am looking forward to sharing with my colleagues from across the country, is build a foundation here in Ontario which expands across the nation and invests in our human capital.

Ms. Smith: Premier, last week, I had the privilege of being at the Canadore Commerce Court site with president Barbara Taylor, where we announced \$1.1 million of investment through the small northern and rural colleges fund. Canadore, as you know, is at the forefront of training in apprenticeships and in skills, trades and development in the north, and we are very proud of the programs we have developed in partnership with our local school boards in a lot of our smaller communities.

At that time, Barbara Taylor told me that she will be participating tomorrow in the national post-secondary education and skills training forum. I understand that Ontario is taking a leadership role in this, and I would like you to please share with the House how we, as Ontarians, are taking a lead in improving training and post-secondary education across our country.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, I thank the member for her question and for her commitment to improving training and educational opportunities for her constituents. Premier Charest and I are determined, by way of hosting this summit, to bring together stakeholders from right across the country—all the provinces and the territories. We're bringing people there who represent educational institutions, educators themselves, business, labour and, of course, student representatives. This is all about exploring the challenges we face across the country as a whole and then finding better ways to exploit the opportunities.

We in Ontario firmly believe that education does a number of absolutely marvellous things for us. It enriches the enjoyment of our life, which is something that we sometimes overlook, it strengthens our economy and it strengthens our democracy, because educated and skilled citizens have a better understanding of the issues that go before them. For all those reasons and many, many more, I am very much looking forward to co-hosting the summit in Ottawa—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. New question.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): A question to the Premier: Could the Premier inform the House why personal and business bankruptcies are on the rise in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): Again, there's just so much negativity coming from the Conservative Party. We remain very optimistic about our economy. We take heart in the fact that hard-working Ontarians who go out there every day and borrow money and take risks have created some 215,000 net new jobs—we haven't created them, and I'm not going to take credit for that—since we first earned the job of governing. So it may be that the Conservative Party is down on the economy, which means, effectively, they are down on the ability of Ontarians to pull through any challenge that we have, but I disagree with that entirely. I have confidence in the economy because I have confidence in the people of Ontario.

Mr. Hudak: It's disappointing that the Premier dismisses out of hand the fact that business and personal bankruptcies are on the rise in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario. It's not just me; it's a CIBC World Markets report from this week. Let me give you the facts: in 2005, a 6.2% increase in business bankruptcies, the worst performance in the entire nation; in 2005, personal bank-

ruptcies in Ontario were not much better, the second-worst performance in Canada.

Clearly, your high taxes, high energy costs and runaway-spending fiscal policies are impacting on working families and businesses in the province of Ontario. Premier, I'll ask you one more time, why are personal and business bankruptcies on the rise in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, and what are you going to do about it?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, I can't fathom the reason for the negativity when it comes to the Ontario economy, and I don't understand why the Conservative Party wants to talk down Ontario. They want to talk down the Ontario economy, which really means they want to talk down the ability of Ontarians to pull together and work together through any challenges that we might face.

Again, I say to the members opposite, but more importantly I say to the people of Ontario, that I have confidence in their abilities. I am pleased with the fact and proud of the fact that they on their own have generated some 215,800 new jobs since we first earned the privilege of serving them as the government. In January alone, the people of Ontario created 15,600 net new jobs. I do not share in the member opposite's pessimism. I'm optimistic, together with the people of Ontario, when it comes to their future and their economy.

HYDRO GENERATION

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question again is to the Premier. Last night, over 200 concerned, determined and sometimes angry citizens met to discuss your plan to build a mega power plant on Toronto's waterfront. Let me tell you, it is absolutely clear from last night's meeting that the east end is overwhelmingly opposed to your plans. Why are you ignoring the community and simply making the wrong choice for the east end of Toronto and for the citizens of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): I find it absolutely overwhelming that the person who is the third party's environmental critic would actually be asking us to waive an environmental assessment, because there is no environmental assessment on the proposed Hearn site. The other very interesting part is that that same party is now proposing that we transfer to a private company, Florida Power & Light, at no cost, an asset that belongs to the people of Ontario. So I'm quite taken aback and overwhelmed by these questions.

Mr. Prue: It's no wonder; almost everything overwhelms this minister. I think she is incapable of understanding that an environmental assessment needs to be done on your proposal, not the truncated little job that you did on it already.

Mr. Premier, there are a number of solutions that are both environmentally friendly and will ensure that the lights stay on in Toronto. I repeat, it's not too late for you to tell your minister that she is dead wrong and will do

something that nobody in our community wants. That's why 200 people showed up last night, and that's why the community as a whole has voiced their concern about your inappropriate actions.

Why are you ignoring our community? Why are you ignoring the positive alternatives? Why are you ignoring the city of Toronto? Why are you ignoring Toronto Hydro? Why are you ignoring everybody who's trying to develop the waterfront? That's what we want to know. Why are you building something we don't want?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I'm very pleased to respond. We are building because we are going to keep the lights on in Toronto. The Independent Electricity System Operator has indicated that by the year 2008, there will be rolling blackouts in downtown Toronto—hospitals, universities, businesses, schools—the economic engine not only of this province but of Canada.

They are proposing that, instead, we put up part-time emergency generation. "Just spend \$120 million and we'll take it down in a few years. Who cares?" I use the money far more prudently on behalf of the people of Ontario. We will keep the lights on for the people of Ontario. We will make a difference because we know where we're going, not where we have been.

1440

CONSERVATION

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): My question is for the Minister of Energy. We've heard much about the government wanting to create a culture of conservation in the province. I know as well as you do that this can't happen overnight. To ensure that we can create that culture, we need to give Ontarians the necessary tools to do so. The most popular example, of course, is the blue box. Twenty years ago, few people outside Ontario recycled; now it's second nature for everyone.

My constituents, whom you had the pleasure of meeting last week at my energy forum, are keen on becoming a part of this culture. Conservation has an important role to play in shaping Ontario's energy future. A megawatt saved is a megawatt we don't have to produce. Minister, what steps has the government taken to ensure that a culture of conservation is being fostered and takes hold in Ontario?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): I'd like to commend the member from Willowdale and the member from Don Valley West for involving themselves in an energy forum with their communities. I also have to say that a significant number of members from the official opposition have involved themselves in energy forums. But unfortunately, only one person—who is no longer here—from the third party thinks that energy forums and conservation are of any value.

What we have done is put a number of things into place. With Bill 100, for the first time we have a chief conservation energy officer in this province with responsibility to look at provincial programs. If and when passed, we will have Bill 21, which is the first conser-

vation bill in Canada, the second in North America, that would require municipalities, schools, colleges, universities and the broader public to engage in conservation initiatives. And that's just the beginning. We have done many things to put in place the beginning of creating that culture of conservation.

Mr. Zimmer: Minister, you mentioned that Bill 21 is a part of our plan to build a culture of conservation. You've shown that conservation is more than just shutting the light off when you leave the room or making sure the dishwasher is full before you run it. Conservation requires a multi-faceted approach. That means using energy wisely and ensuring that we have the regulations in place and have programs in place that engage communities.

What measures have been included in the bill to ensure that we can work on improving conservation using these tools?

Interjections.

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I understand the members of the third party find this amusing. They have since the beginning. In fact, they were the party that collapsed all of the programs that might have made things a whole lot different.

Our bill, if and when it's passed, will require the MUSH sector—municipalities, universities, schools and hospitals—and the broader public sector agencies to actually put together conservation plans, publish them and be accountable to those plans, so we can create that culture of conservation for the people of Ontario.

There may be people here who do not care, but I can assure you there are people all through Ontario who know that conservation makes a difference in their lives. The footprint that they choose to leave behind will be a lot lighter than the footprint that was left behind by the third party.

LAYOFFS

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): I have a question for the Premier. As you know, the manufacturing sector finds itself in a major crisis under your watch. Plant closures and layoffs have devastated families and communities across Ontario. The leader of the official opposition, John Tory, has asked you time and again to meet with officials from communities affected by these layoffs, and mentioned some of them in the opposition day motion that you supported and that was passed unanimously in this House on December 8.

I understand that you have recently met with officials from Cornwall to discuss the employment crisis in their community. In the meeting, they presented you with a list 18 actions your government could take to alleviate some of the problems your policies have helped create. Can you inform the House which of these 18 items has seen action to date?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I had a very good meeting with representatives of the community of Cornwall and

we look forward to working with them on an ongoing basis. I can tell you that, more than just having meetings with communities that have been affected by job losses, we have put into place a job-loss protocol, where the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade as well as the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities lead a multi-ministry team that could also include the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Community and Social Services. The purpose of that team is to put into place an effective adjustment advisory program. I'll talk more about the details of that in the supplementary.

Mr. Chudleigh: Collingwood, for example, has seen the devastating impact of your policies. Terry Geddes, the mayor of Collingwood, and the honourable member for Simcoe–Grey have written to you requesting a meeting to discuss the problems they have been having in their community, and you have yet to respond to them. Premier, is one meeting with one community all Ontarians can expect from this Premier? Is your tour of duty over with respect to the communities in Ontario that have been hard hit by your energy and taxation policies?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: We're very concerned when any community, but to bring it down to its most basic level any family, is affected by a job loss and the devastating impact it can have on that family. We are going to work as hard as we can to put in place the necessary supports to help industries and sectors that are particularly challenged in an era of globalization. Perhaps the member opposite can, but we on this side of the House cannot guarantee that there will be no job losses of any kind at any time. What we can do is work as hard as we can, by way of our auto sector strategy, our advanced manufacturing strategy, our forestry sector strategy and the supports we're putting in place for Ontario's farmers, to help industry turn around and get on a more sustainable footing. At the same time, we can also work with other sectors that are growing more rapidly so they can generate more jobs. At the end of the day, this economy has still generated 215,000 net new jobs. On the whole, there's good news out there.

FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): A question to the Premier: Sir, why won't you protect French-language health services providers from the arbitrary power of the minister to force amalgamation?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I really have no idea where the member is coming from on this, but I can say that I would ask the member to consider our record in this regard and our devotion to Ontario's francophone community. That has been expressed either through the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, with additional funding provided for francophone services, or the Ministry of Culture, and there are a variety of other min-

istries in this government. We look forward to continuing to work with the francophone community to ensure that they are well served.

Mr. Kormos: Premier, folks down in Welland know all about your record. Your closure of the only Bill 8 land registry office in Welland and its transfer to non-Bill 8 St. Catharines is part of that record. Foyer Richelieu is a long-term-care facility that has obtained great success in maintaining French-language traditions through language, customs and cuisine, among other things. They are fearful they could become victim of section 28 of your Bill 36 LHINs and forced into amalgamation with non-francophone providers. Will you stand and guarantee today that Foyer Richelieu in Welland and any other French-language, francophone, health service provider will not be forced into amalgamation with an anglophone health service provider?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: What I will do is undertake to have the Minister of Health speak more directly to this, but what I can say is that we remain devoted to meeting and satisfying the legitimate, lawful needs of Franco-Ontarians.

Je suis fier de dire cela. En tant que fils d'une Franco-Ontarienne qui vient du nord de l'Ontario, en tant que père de quatre enfants qui ont tous fréquenté des écoles de langue française, alors, le sujet traité par M. Kormos n'est pas, pour moi, quelque chose d'abstrait. C'est quelque chose qui est très important et très personnel.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I would just remind members: It's improper to refer to members by their proper names. Riding names are what is needed.

1450

VIOLENT CRIME

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): My question is for the minister responsible for children and youth services. Minister, guns and gangs have been on everybody's mind in the past while, and with good reason. Every corner of the city has, in one way or another, been touched by criminal gangs and the guns used by gangs. Community groups, church leaders, our police forces and youth organizations have risen and confronted the problem with a very unified voice. Curtailing the violence caused by guns and gangs is everybody's responsibility.

What have we done to increase the positive opportunities in our communities so that our youth can reach their full potential and grow up to be good citizens in our province of Ontario?

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): I'd like to thank the member from York West for that very important question. I think I need to start by saying that there's no question in my mind that the overwhelming majority of our young people are law-abiding citizens.

We have not just recently been focusing on this, however. The Premier earlier today made reference to our investment in post-secondary education, which was announced last year. The Premier and our government

committed to ensuring that young people simply need to have the interest and the ability, and don't necessarily have to be wealthy, in order to pursue post-secondary education. Tuition grants that were introduced last year will allow children and young people from all communities to pursue college and university.

Very recently, we announced \$28.5 million over the next three years in a youth opportunities—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Sergio: I would like to thank the Minister of Children and Youth Services for her response. I find it very excellent to hear about the allocation of millions of dollars for youth outreach programs that our government has indeed committed to our communities.

Now that I know what we are doing to be tough on the causes of crime, I would like to ask the minister: What are we doing to be tough on crime? Minister, what actions is the McGuinty government taking to reduce gun crimes, prosecute those responsible and stop the spread of illegal guns in our province?

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: I'd like to refer that question to the Attorney General.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): There's no doubt that the member for York West is truly a champion of public safety for his community and for the people of this province.

Last month, the Premier announced the single greatest infusion of capacity into our criminal justice system with his announcement to establish a provincial operations centre, expand the guns and gangs task force, including prosecution and police of all jurisdictions working together for the first time ever, and state-of-the-art technology through our provincial operations centre, recommended by chiefs of police and the OPP commissioner. In addition to that, a major crimes court is to be established to ensure that these new and significant cases, with a significant number of defendants, will have an appropriate forum that protects victims; a special victims' unit that assists families and victims of gun crime who have particular trauma—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

FARM INCOME

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): To the Minister of Agriculture: In the last week and a half we've seen two very large cash-crop farm protests in both Guelph and Ottawa. Minister, my question is simple. It can be answered with a yes or a no. Will your government comply with the farmers' ultimatum, the March 9 deadline for a risk management program for our grain and oilseed farmers?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I'm very happy to say that our Premier has made it very clear: We are prepared to deal with the farm income issue along with the federal government.

Mr. Barrett: I didn't hear a yes or no. You are prepared—you know, the deadline isn't really about you or the Premier; it's about planting season and the banks. Farmers have to buy seed, they have to buy fertilizer, they have to buy spray, they have to buy fuel—repairs for their machinery. This deadline is very real. I hope you would address it.

Today's local headlines: "Farming Crisis Destroys Families," "We're almost in a Death Spiral."

The federal Liberals announced \$755 million. The federal Conservatives announced an additional \$500 million. I wish to ask Minister Dombrowsky—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Come to order. Question?

Mr. Barrett: My question to Minister Dombrowsky: How much are you announcing?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: First of all, I'd like to inform the honourable member that he's a couple of weeks too late in terms of bringing this information to us. The Premier had the opportunity to meet with agriculture leaders after the Premier's agri-food summit. So the Premier heard directly from the industry some two weeks ago about all the issues you have raised today.

He has made very clear that he is aware of how urgent their issues are. He has told them that when he spoke with Prime Minister Harper, two issues were identified as priorities, and he urged the Prime Minister to act swiftly, because Ontario is there with the money, and we want the federal government there with us. It would appear that the federal government is not eager to move as swiftly as we are, but I have told the agriculture community, and I'm very pleased to have this opportunity to tell you today, that we are there with the money. We want the feds there—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

AIR QUALITY

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): In the absence of the Minister of the Environment, I will direct my question to the Premier. Eleven individuals and organizations, including the city of Hamilton and Dr. David Pengelly, professor of medicine at both McMaster University and the University of Toronto, are asking you for a full environmental assessment of Liberty Energy's energy-from-waste incinerator. Dr. Pengelly has called the emission of nitrogen oxides an urgent matter of public health concern, especially given that Liberty's own consultants admit that Hamilton's airshed has shown signs of reaching its capacity. Given the seriousness of the health and environmental implications of Liberty's incinerator, will you immediately call for a bump-up to a full environmental assessment at this facility?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): Let me just say that we are absolutely committed to giving local residents an opportunity to comment on this proposed undertaking. The environmental assessment required for electricity projects

is facilitating this opportunity. I understand that the proponent has followed this environmental assessment process to date, and attempted to address the concerns raised. I know that the Minister of the Environment's director is presently awaiting some additional information before the formal review process begins.

As a rule, our government is committed to ensuring that we do everything we reasonably can to improve the quality of air in the province of Ontario, and it's with that in mind that this project, like all the others, will be reviewed.

PETITIONS

FREDERICK BANTING HOMESTEAD

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Sir Frederick Banting was the man who discovered insulin and was Canada's first Nobel Prize recipient; and

"Whereas this great Canadian's original homestead, located in the town of New Tecumseth, is deteriorating and in danger of destruction because of the inaction of the Ontario Historical Society; and

"Whereas the town of New Tecumseth has been unsuccessful in reaching an agreement with the Ontario Historical Society to use part of the land to educate the public about the historical significance of the work of Sir Frederick Banting;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Culture endorse Simcoe-Grey MPP Jim Wilson's private member's bill entitled the Frederick Banting Homestead Preservation Act so that the homestead is kept in good repair and preserved for generations to come."

I want to thank Mr. Bill Smith, of Angus, for circulating that petition.

1500

IDENTIFY THEFT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition that has to do with credit reporting agencies. It's addressed to the Parliament of Ontario, and the Minister of Government Services specifically. It reads as follows:

"Whereas identity theft is the fastest-growing crime in North America;

"Whereas confidential and private information is being stolen on a regular basis, affecting literally thousands of people;

"Whereas the cost of this crime exceeds billions of dollars;

"Whereas countless hours are wasted to restore one's good credit rating;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that Bill 38, which passed unanimously on November 30, 2005, be brought before committee and that the following issues be included for consideration and debate:

"(1) All consumer reports should be provided in a truncated (masked-out) form, protecting our vital private information, such as, SIN and loan account numbers.

"(2) Should a consumer reporting agency discover that there has been an unlawful disclosure of consumer information, the agency should immediately inform the affected consumer.

"(3) The consumer reporting agency shall only report credit-inquiry records resulting from actual applications for credit or increase of credit, except in a report given to the consumer.

"(4) The consumer reporting agency shall investigate disputed information within 30 days and correct, supplement or automatically delete any information found unconfirmed, incomplete or inaccurate."

Since I'm in total agreement with this petition, I'm certainly delighted to sign it.

SPECIAL CARE HOMES

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas hundreds of vulnerable adults live in homes for special care that provide them a warm and secure, stable and friendly environment which allows them to lead fulfilling lives; and

"Whereas the alternative for many of these individual is a life of homelessness on the street; and

"Whereas special care homes have had only a single 3% increase since 1999, which in no way matches the rising costs they face; and

"Whereas the Liberal government promised Ontario in the election they would 'significantly increase supportive housing options for those suffering from mental illness';

"Therefore we, the undersigned, call on the government to bring in an immediate increase in funding to homes for special care."

As I am in agreement, I've affixed my signature and am pleased to be able to give this to Ian.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas during the 2003 election campaign Dalton McGuinty promised to establish a standing committee on education to ensure transparency in education funding; and

"Whereas such a committee has not been established; and

"Whereas Ontario's education system is not properly funded and there is no transparency in funding;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately establish a standing committee on education to hold public hearings every year on the effectiveness of education funding."

I support the petition.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition prepared by Sonny Sansone from my riding. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontario farmers are facing difficulties in earning their living and supporting their families;

"Whereas urban residents, such as those in Toronto, count on a reliable food supply from Ontario farmers; and

"Whereas farming is an integral part of the Ontario economy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To ensure that Ontario farmers are supported so that all residents can count on a reliable, well-priced, safe food supply for all Ontario residents."

I agree with this petition. I affix my signature to it and give it to page Ian today.

SPECIAL CARE HOMES

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas hundreds of vulnerable adults live in homes for special care that provide them a warm and secure, stable and friendly environment which allows them to lead fulfilling lives; and

"Whereas the alternative for many of these individuals is a life of homelessness on the street; and

"Whereas special care homes have had only a single 3% increase since 1999, which in no way matches the rising costs they face; and

"Whereas the Liberal government promised Ontario in the election they would 'significantly increase supportive housing options for those suffering from mental illness';

"Therefore we, the undersigned, call on the government to bring in an immediate increase in funding to homes for special care."

I agree fully with this petition. I affix my signature to it.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): "Whereas rebuilding our post-secondary education system is critical to the future of our communities and our province; and

"Whereas high tuition user fees are resulting in massive student debt; and

"Whereas Ontario ranks second-last among all provinces in terms of total PSE budget received from

government grants and has the highest percentage of total post-secondary education revenue from private sources; and

“Whereas working and learning conditions must be healthy and safe, because working conditions are learning conditions; and

“Whereas the deferred maintenance cost at Ontario university campuses is estimated to have already reached the \$2-billion mark;

“We, the undersigned, support the Canadian Union of Public Employees’ call on the provincial government to invest sufficient public funds that will:

“(1) Restore public money cut from operating funds since 1995 and bring Ontario up to the national average for funding post-secondary education;

“(2) Finance the \$1.98 billion needed for deferred maintenance; and

“(3) Provide the funding needed to continue the tuition freeze beyond 2006 and increase grants to working-class families.”

I agree with this petition, and I’m signing it.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition from many of my constituents and also from constituents around the province. This petition has been read many times in the Legislature, but I’d like to read it again.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

“Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

“Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community.”

I affix my signature, as I agree with the petition.

TEACHER QUALIFICATION

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): “Whereas the 2005 graduates of the publicly funded faculties of education in the province of Ontario will have met all the requirements of the individual faculties; and

“Whereas these same publicly funded faculties of education in the province of Ontario have all met the stringent standards as outlined and controlled by the Ontario College of Teachers; and

“Whereas the 2005 graduates of the publicly funded faculties of education in the province of Ontario will be placed at a severe disadvantage if they are given a provisional certificate of qualification by the Ontario College of Teachers;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To make the changes necessary to the Education Act and/or its regulations in order to grant the 2005 graduates of the publicly funded faculties of education in the province of Ontario a permanent certificate of qualification, or

“To deem that the bachelor of education degree granted to the 2005 graduates of the publicly funded faculties of education in the province of Ontario deems them to have completed the equivalent of the Ontario teacher qualification test, thus allowing the Ontario College of Teachers to grant these same graduates a permanent certificate of qualification.”

I agree with these petitions, and I am signing them.

1510

CHILD CARE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition addressed to the Parliament of Ontario in regard to daycare support. It reads as follows:

“Whereas there is a well-documented need for daycare spaces in the province of Ontario;”

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Very good.

Mr. Ruprecht: Thank you.

“Whereas the former government of Canada and the” —

Interjection.

Mr. Ruprecht: Thank you very much.

“Whereas the former government of Canada and the present government of Ontario recognize that need;

“Whereas the government of Canada committed \$1.87 billion over five years and the government of Ontario continues to commit \$700,000 a year for the purpose of expanding daycare spaces for Canadians.

“Therefore we, the undersigned citizens, call on the newly elected federal Canadian government to live up to the signed agreement between the government of Ontario and the government of Canada to provide thousands of daycare spaces for our children in the province of Ontario.”

Since I agree, I’m delighted to sign this petition.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): These petitions have hundreds of signatures from tobacco men, orchard men, fruit and vegetable growers who depend on migrant labour. It’s titled “Bunkhouse Tax Assessment is Bunk!”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas MPAC (the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation) is implementing residential assessment of farm bunkhouses that were previously assessed at the farm rate, resulting in assessment levels four times the previous rate; and

"Whereas usually farm bunkhouses are occupied a few months a year; and

"Whereas farmers are already reeling from the financial impacts of rising input costs, low commodity prices and government regulation;

"We, the undersigned, request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to hold assessment values at last year's levels until a fairer method of assessment is developed, or a reclassification of bunkhouse properties is made."

I affix my signature to this.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I'm pleased to join with my colleague from Scarborough Southwest in this petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontario farmers are facing difficulties in earning their living and supporting their families;

"Whereas urban residents, such as those in Toronto, count on a reliable food supply from Ontario farmers; and

"Whereas farming is an integral part of the Ontario economy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To ensure that Ontario farmers are supported so that all residents can count on a reliable, well-priced, safe food supply for all Ontario residents."

That's an excellent petition. I'm pleased to affix my signature to it, and ask page William to carry it on my behalf.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition to do with library services. It says:

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the \$700,000 cut in funding to the Ontario Library Service ... budget will have a significant impact on the delivery of public library service across the province in areas such as:

"—reductions in the frequency of inter-library loan deliveries;

"—reductions in the SOLS' consultation services and the elimination of a number of staff positions;

"—the elimination of province-wide research on library and socio-demographic trends that all libraries need for their own planning;

"—the reduction of consortia/charitable purchasing, a service that provides economies-of-scale discounts to libraries on a variety of goods and services; and

"—a reduction in the amount of material that is translated for OLS French-language clients;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To restore funding to the Ontario Library Service ... in order to signal support for the Ontario public library system."

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENERGY CONSERVATION RESPONSIBILITY ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ EN MATIÈRE DE CONSERVATION DE L'ÉNERGIE

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 20, 2006, on the motion for third reading of Bill 21, An Act to enact the Energy Conservation Leadership Act, 2006 and to amend the Electricity Act, 1998, the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and the Conservation Authorities Act / Projet de loi 21, Loi édictant la Loi de 2006 sur le leadership en matière de conservation de l'énergie et apportant des modifications à la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité, à la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et à la Loi sur les offices de protection de la nature.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I believe the leader of the third party has the floor.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Allow me to refer to one of the submissions that was made to the standing committee. This is from John S. McGee, a professional electrical engineer. This is what he has to say in his submission:

"I submit that all aspects of the bill dealing with smart metering in schedules B and C should be entirely deleted. The main reason for this recommendation is that the very high capital and operating costs of the smart metering have not been subjected to a cost-benefit analysis. The smart metering initiative is unlikely to contribute in any material way to the government's objective of making more efficient use of Ontario's existing electricity supply system and reducing reliance on external sources. This objective can be met at far less cost and with more certainty by means that I will outline later."

Then he goes into the implementation costs. He says:

"Their estimated total capital cost for smart meters was \$1.07 billion with annual operating costs of \$50 million....

"Depending on specifications written by the Ontario metering entity, all existing meters, including smart meters installed under pilot programs, could become obsolete and consigned to already loaded landfill sites.

"And of course, with mass introduction of new technology there will be unforeseen technical problems that will further add to costs.

"So it is reasonable to expect costs to balloon to the \$1.5-billion to \$2-billion range."

This is interesting, what he says:

"It should be apparent that the 4.25 million residential and small general service customers have little ability to shift load to lower-cost off-peak periods. Even with a smart meter they won't know the hourly cost of electricity until the day after they used it. The idea of doing laundry, washing dishes or bathing in the wee hours of the morning is not going to fly. Small retail businesses must be open to respond to customer needs which are predominantly in the daytime peak hours. Time-of-use electricity billing has been available on an optional basis for decades for small consumers. The uptake has been virtually nil because of inability to shift load.

"Large industrial and commercial customers have been billed on a time-of-use basis for decades and it is unlikely they will shift any more load than they already have."

Then he makes an interesting point. He talks about cost allocation:

"The cost-allocation approach under consideration by the Ontario Energy Board is a dollar addition to the fixed monthly service charge. Since the residential customer count is 93% of the total, they"—the residential customers—"will bear 93% of the cost even though they use only about 28% of the electricity produced. Since the commodity component of the bill for small consumers is less than 50% of the total, the smallest consumers will see the highest percentage impact of smart meters, yet they have the least ability to avoid the increased cost by shifting load."

I think that's an important point. Under the scheme that the government is entertaining, people who have the least capacity to shift load, and, by the way, very likely people who have the lowest or the most modest incomes, will get hit the hardest by this government's approach.

I want to say something about apartments. What the government has done is, while they refer to this as smart metering, in fact, they're also trying to slide in the concept of sub-metering. What sub-metering means is this: Let's say you have an apartment building. In many apartment buildings, people do not pay for their electricity directly; it's part of their rent bill. The reason for that is in many cases the tenant doesn't have control over the major use of electricity in the building. In most apartment buildings, the tenant doesn't own the appliances; the appliances are put there by the landlord. In some cases, the appliances may be 10, 15, 20 years old and are not energy efficient. Charging the tenant for an appliance that he or she has very little control over would be irrational to most people. Similarly, many apartments don't have individual thermometers. In older apartments, quite often, that's the case. So if you have electric heat, the tenant has no control.

1520

One of the things the government is considering doing—in fact, I think they've already made the decision—is to slide in sub-metering. I again want to read from a submission that was made by a tenant who lives in Toronto. This is the point she makes to the committee:

"On the chance that sub-metering should be on the agenda as an amendment in Bill 21, I would like to make the following comments.

"I have lived for 30 years in this 37-year-old building and it has the original appliances. Although in good working order, they are definitely not energy efficient!

"I have a corner apartment with a walk-in closet that is so cold in winter [that] I use some of the space as a cold room to store bottled water, vegetables, etc.

"The outside walls of the apartment are extremely cold to the touch—almost as if there is no insulation or it is very thin.

"When I first moved into this apartment, it was supplied with thermostats to control the heat, but they were disconnected some years ago so that the landlord had control. A few years ago, we asked the landlord to reconnect them but were told, 'It is too expensive.' I can't believe he would now do it voluntarily! As a result, when the landlord got a little stingy with the heat many people used small, plug-in heaters. If sub-metering goes ahead, then these thermostats should be reconnected so that heat expense in the apartment is in the hands of the tenant, with a better chance of encouraging conservation.

"None of the above items are under a tenant's control, and if sub-meters are installed, it would be extremely unfair to the tenants in this building without first addressing the measures I have indicated."

There is a lot wrong with this bill. There's not much energy efficiency in it. That's why—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have listened very carefully, in the two days, to the remarks of the member from Kenora—Rainy River and leader of the third party.

I'd just like to get on the record, if I could, that on December 17, 2005, the Toronto Star published an article that described a pilot conducted by Hydro One to provide real-time information to 500 homes through the use of in-home displays and smart meters. Ontario chief energy conservation officer, Peter Love, strongly supported the results of the pilot, indicating he was in favour of installing in-home displays. The project captured energy use in homes in Barrie, Brampton, Lincoln, Peterborough and Timmins. These devices recorded energy use between July 2004 and September 2005, with the results indicating that participants reduced their energy use between 7% and 10%.

That pilot certainly indicated that the use of smart meters and new technology does indeed allow individuals to reduce their energy consumption.

I want to reiterate that on the larger pilot of 1,000 homes in Chatham-Kent, which we had an opportunity to receive information about when we were visiting Chatham during committee deliberations, the all-in cost was \$1.29, because they retrofitted the meters already installed in homes. They found technology that would allow them to do so. That study certainly indicated substantial savings by those 1,000 single-family residences in Chatham.

I'd like to reiterate that those findings were verified by the accounting firm Deloitte, which looked at all the numbers that were provided by the Chatham-Kent pilot study to, in effect, show conclusively that savings can be achieved by the installation of smart meters. I think it's important that that information be put on the record.

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): To comment on what we just heard from the member from Kenora–Rainy River, I also have a submission on sub-metering in rental units. This comes from the Algoma Community Legal Clinic up in the Soo. They basically indicate, in contrast to what we just heard in the last two minutes, that smart meters are a flawed conservation strategy and will significantly decrease, rather than increase, any incentives to save energy in the multi-residential sector. They point out that allowing smart meters and sub-metering to be used in large multi-unit buildings—government as well—will increase the financial burden on low-income tenant households, thereby threatening their ability to keep the lights on, maintain their housing, and pay for food, medicine and other basic necessities. The key message from this submission is that by shifting the burden of electricity consumption from landlords to tenants, this Liberal government will reduce conservation incentives overall in the sector and will hurt low-income consumers. Clearly, I see this as a lose-lose situation.

There's another presentation. It's from the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario. It's titled Zapping Tenants, and it includes a critical analysis of sub-metering. Their main concern is that no comparative studies or analyses on either the costs or the benefits of sub-metering versus other conservation strategies have been done to justify the inclusion of a sub-metering, smart meter approach in these large rental buildings.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): I want to congratulate the leader of the NDP, the member from Kenora–Rainy River, for his one-hour speech this week and another hour speech last November on this very bill, thanking him for his leadership on issues connected to energy and congratulating him on appropriately mocking the Liberal government and their delusional pretenses around energy conservation.

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): Harsh words.

Mr. Marchese: Harsh indeed. The act says “An Act to enact the Energy Conservation Leadership Act,” and I will have an opportunity in an hour or so to elucidate and elongate my remarks around this particular issue.

When you read this, if any of you have an opportunity to read this bill, Bill 21, when you get to the part that talks about energy conservation leadership, what you will note—and that's why I say our leader has appropriately mocked this Liberal government—is it requires no one to do anything around energy conservation. There's no requirement for anyone to do anything. So for this section of the bill to be labelled “energy conservation leadership” is highly, highly inappropriate. They know this. They know there's nothing within this bill that speaks to that, but I will, and our leader has.

He also addresses the issue of smart meters. He has pointed out, in committee and in this House, that the government is going to be—actually, not the government. We're going to be spending approximately \$2 billion on capital alone on this, forgetting the cost for operational, and not one cost-benefit analysis has been done. How wrong can this government be on this issue? Very wrong. I'll speak to that.

Mr. Kuldeep Kular (Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale): I'm pleased to participate in this debate on Bill 21, An Act to enact the Energy Conservation Leadership Act, 2006 and to amend the Electricity Act, 1998, the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and the Conservation Authorities Act.

First of all, I want to applaud and thank the minister for taking a leadership role in this bill. As outlined in this bill, there are four schedules. Schedule A deals with providing leadership. The McGuinty government is fully committed to providing that leadership for energy conservation by taking action as well as consulting the people of this province to help build a culture; that is, the culture of energy conservation.

I had the privilege of moving into a new house recently and I decided to put a smart meter in my new house. I am quite sure this smart meter is going to save some energy for me and it will save me some expenses. The leadership of energy conservation is one of the ways to help energy conservation culture, by the McGuinty government's commitment to deliver 800,000 smart meters by the year 2007, and across the province by about 2010. I think the minister needs support and I'm fully supportive of this bill.

1530

The Acting Speaker: It's time for response.

Mr. Hampton: I want to thank the other members for their comments and insights. I want to return to the letter I was reading from a Toronto tenant commenting on the potential of sub-metering in her apartment building:

“If sub-metering in high-rise buildings should become a fact, installation expense should be paid by the landlord as it is a basic change to the building. It should not even be considered for these older buildings!

“Installing sub-meters without the tenants' consent is trampling on their rights. Our original leases in this building have utilities included.

“It would be a horrendous task to calculate a fair rent reduction for sub-meters for each individual apartment in each building, and I believe too easy to deceive the tenants on the accuracy of the calculations. One size does not fit all!

“If this goes ahead and the end result is higher costs to the tenants, it will result in even more vacancies and that will definitely conserve on the utilities.”

She makes the point that there should be conservation, but as she says, conservation and energy efficiency would involve replacing the windows, would involve putting in better insulation, would involve taking out an inefficient heating system and putting in a high-efficiency heating system, would involve retrofitting with

energy-efficient appliances. But if you put all of the bill on to the tenant, when all of these things are under the control of the landlord, the landlord no longer has any incentive to do any of these things because the tenant is paying the full load and the landlord gets a free ride. So I would urge the government to think about that before they go down the road of sub-metering.

Let me just say in conclusion that this bill continues a pattern under this government, a pattern where they hold photo-ops, where they make announcements, but when you look under the covers, there's no substance. There is very little substance to this bill, there's very little energy efficiency, very little energy conservation, and that's why it's a big problem.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): A generation ago, Ontario had an abundance of electrical generation capacity. We had—and I might add, continue to have—a technological advantage in the superior engineering used in our thermal generating plants. Then, inexplicably, we stopped building generating capacity, just as Ontario's population growth accelerated. Soon our surplus turned to balance, and then slipped into shortage on the watch of the two previous governments.

Ontario needs about 25,000 megawatts of generating capacity to meet its peak needs at the height of the summer heat. Beginning in the dying years of the last government, Ontario became a regular importer of out-of-province, expensive, peak power and Ontario paid premium prices for every kilowatt hour.

Let me use an analogy to describe the state of our electrical generating assets. Let's suppose you had bought a new car in the mid-1970s and in the years since you had used your car all day, every day, and even though you had done all the required maintenance and treated the car very well, the fact remains that you still drive a 30-year-old car with high mileage. No matter how well you've treated it, you have an old piece of machinery that will soon need replacement. What remains beyond dispute is that in the same way an individual needs to replace an old, high-mileage car, Ontario needs to upgrade or replace its electrical generating capacity.

While Bill 21 is not about the building of generating stations, it is about a practice that will help us make the best use of the generating capacity that we still have, and that's conservation. Conservation is a little like physical fitness. Everyone says they're all for it, but people practise it in different proportions. We've had awareness and education programs on conservation for decades. To a large extent, the message has been received. To a more limited extent, however, behaviour has changed.

The proposals in Bill 21 will bring the implications of energy conservation home to roost in Ontario's homes and businesses. That means if, in physical fitness terms, you're in favour of physical fitness and you also maintain an active and healthy lifestyle, you're acting in your best interests and those of your family, and you'll be rewarded. If, in energy conservation terms, you walk the walk and install a programmable thermostat, put timers

on the lights that you prefer to leave on, use the time delay on your electrical appliances and so on, then the provisions of Bill 21 will likely be a pleasant surprise. If you're doing your personal best to use electricity sensibly, even while you watch others in your area crank up their air conditioners high enough to see their breath in the house on the hottest days, you might wonder what it takes to get people to get the importance of conserving energy.

Let's look at just one such measure: the smart meter. What's a smart meter? It's a device that measures not just how much electricity you use, but at what time you use it. This concept isn't new to us as Ontarians. Our telephone and cellphone providers have used smart metering technology to bill us for the air time or the bandwidth that we consume for years. With that widely accepted concept already deployed, consider the century-old technology that's in use outside your home that records your use of electricity. All it does is record how many kilowatt hours of electricity you've consumed.

You'd scream long and loud if your cellphone minutes were being billed at prime rates and not at off-peak rates if that's when you used the service. That's all a smart meter does. If you're a smart user, a smart meter delivers you a smart discount. If you're a wasteful user, the smart meter not only charges you the premium price you've incurred, but the data it provides will show you very clearly what patterns you can change to cross the divide between being a wasteful user and being a smart user.

How do I know this? Enersource in Mississauga included me in their pilot project. They installed a smart meter in my Churchill Meadows home in western Mississauga. The information I have on my home's energy consumption shows me very clearly how much electricity we save by using compact fluorescent bulbs, by turning off electrical appliances when we're not using them and by upgrading our stove, our fridge, our washer, our dryer and our dishwasher. We've upgraded them to more energy-efficient models, and we can see the difference. As we see how much money we save just by shifting the use of our appliances to later hours, we can also see the difference in terms of our savings by simply pressing the time delay control.

Smart meters reward smart behaviour. Bill 21 is about rewarding people who do the right things at the right time for the right reasons. Thank you for the time today.

The Acting Speaker: It's time for questions and comments.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): The member, of course, speaks eloquently on the government side to talk about all the attributes of smart metering. Unfortunately, there is the flip side to every positive that we hear about smart meters.

One of the things that concerns me the most about smart meters is its life-altering effect on the families of Ontario. Those people who perhaps are hardest hit by increased electricity costs and charges are the people with two parents working and perhaps two children to look after as well. Those families are going to find it very

difficult to change the time when they can turn on the dishwasher, change the time when they can bath the children, change the time when they can run the washer and the dryer. Running the washer and dryer at 10 o'clock or 11 o'clock at night may sound like a good idea to people who don't have too many children around the house, but if that old washing machine starts knocking and clanging and wakes up the baby, I think that maybe they're going to go back to their normal wash times of 6 o'clock or 7 o'clock in the evening. So the saving that smart meters could bring isn't going to be available to a lot of the families that could use this the most, because their lifestyles just don't allow them to take advantage, to have the flexibility to change the duties they have, the requirements they have in their lives, to change the order of those things to times when they could be more flexible and perhaps make those savings. It's going to be very difficult for many families in Ontario to take charge of their lives and make those savings.

1540

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): I want to take a couple of minutes to comment on the bill and some of the comments made earlier.

The people of Ontario, in my view, are beginning to get it. I heard the comments from the member for Mississauga West. He talked about the ongoing programs around conservation, that people have heard them all and some would respond and some wouldn't, but we're now seeing that people are really beginning to get it.

I held my second annual conservation forum just two weekends ago. It was at a commercial site, so there was some traffic flow available. We literally had thousands of people coming through, stopping and taking the time to visit some 20 different organizations engaged in conservation, and energy and sustainable communities, as well, were part of it.

Among the groups there, I had a local firm, Intellimeter, that develops smart meters and sub-metering and actually does the installations. People were lining up all day long to talk to the owner and his staff about what smart meters can do, the go-forward kind of activity he's engaged in, what kind of technologies can be applied to it once it's there. In addition to the pure energy initiative, they're very interested in other capacities that smart meters will have. They talked to them about sub-metering and the implications for that.

I know the effect the installations in condo buildings and some rental buildings can have on overall energy consumption when people begin to take charge of their own usage. Certainly, there's a disincentive to waste energy in some cases, but a great incentive when they're also saving energy.

At the forum I held, the local LDC was still distributing compact fluorescents to interested parties. Most of us now have many of them in our homes. They took the time to fill out a form. They figured they were going to do maybe 500 or so. They actually went back for more. There were over 600 families that picked up com-

pact fluorescents on that Saturday, and that's 600 more families that are beginning to save energy—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Questions or comments? The Chair recognizes the member from Scarborough West.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Actually, it's Scarborough Southwest, but it's in the west part of Scarborough.

Interjection: It's in the south part too.

Mr. Berardinetti: The south part too, which is close to Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): And you have the bluffs.

Mr. Berardinetti: And we have the bluffs there as well, that's right, and there are a lot of opportunities there to generate energy, perhaps, through other sources such as windmills in the future. That's something to look at in the future.

What makes me happy and I like about the bill is the direction we're taking in terms of conserving and moving towards conserving energy. That is the key. What I want to say in these couple of minutes I have is that when it comes to areas like health and education and even energy, a lot of the focus, for example on health, is on prevention; it's to prevent something before you get a disease. When it comes to education, it's get in there early and don't let our schools get into a bad state so that people don't get an opportunity for a proper education at a young age at a well-established public institution.

So in the same sense, with this bill, we're saying let's conserve energy before we spend it. Let's put in smart meters and have a regulatory system to control the smart meter entities that are going to exist out there. I think in the years to come this will be more and more the direction we're going to move in. Years ago in the health field, people first started talking about prevention of certain types of illness by taking certain actions, like exercising more, having a certain type of diet. More and more, that has become the main way of thinking when it comes to the health area. In energy, too, before we can focus on going forward on an energy plan, we need to look at conservation. This bill does that.

Mr. Barrett: I attended one of the sessions on smart meters that was held in Simcoe, down our way, when the justice committee came down to visit. There were a number of letters and conversations that I had in our community. These people, for whatever reason, didn't testify before the committee. I was concerned; they were in the audience—Norfolk Power, for example—and much of their opposition to smart meters is couched in a communication I have received here from Brant county. They've made it very clear to myself and to the MPP for the Brant riding that the county of Brant is opposed to the proposed smart meter legislation; it removes meter ownership from them, the local electrical distribution company, the LDC. They feel that stripping the meter ownership from not only their own LDC but other LDCs across the province would negatively impact their revenue base and, subsequently, financial contributions to

the municipalities that own these local distribution companies. The province's memorandum of understanding that was signed in 2004 commits to prior consultation on matters that will have a significant financial impact on municipalities.

For whatever reason, they didn't attend the justice committee consultations that I was present at. Norfolk Power: I also received a very similar letter from them, and they don't see any positive outcomes for this initiative.

The Acting Speaker: Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer given to his question by the Premier concerning local health integration networks. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

Time for reply. The Chair recognizes the member for Mississauga West.

Mr. Delaney: I thank the members from Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant, Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge and Scarborough Southwest for their comments.

One point brought out in the debate on this particular bill is the cost of deploying these smart meters. Let me draw on an analogy that we're probably all familiar with: Consider, when they were first introduced, the cost of such things as electronic calculators, computers, cell-phones, microwave ovens and digital watches. They originally came out as premium products, but within a very short time had gone down to the price of commodities. I think we can expect pretty much the same thing of smart meters. As soon as the provisions of Bill 21 allow the manufacturers to say, "Okay, a smart meter is something that will perform the following functions," and to formalize them into a request for proposal or an RFP, we can expect to see the engineering wizards at the companies that manufacture the meters compete on the basis of price, because the functionality will be pretty much established in the RFP. In the same way that we saw exponential declines in the price of common electronic components that we use every day, so, too, we can expect to see the cost of the manufacture and supply of the smart meters fall precipitously to pretty close to the cost of simply manufacturing the components in the few years after the implementation of the energy conservation measures in Bill 21.

That gives me a great deal of confidence, unlike the member for Kenora–Rainy River, who keeps insisting that this is going to be a cost that will spiral out and out of control. I know in my own case, when the time came to install the smart meter, Enersource showed up, we did the job, and it was over with in about 90 seconds.

Thank you for the chance to reply.

1550

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 21, the Energy Conservation Responsibility Act, 2006, which was introduced by the Minister of Energy and which has been capably responded to by our critic, John Yakabuski.

I'm pleased to join the debate today. I think this particular piece of legislation is another example of the fact that this government, despite having been in office for two and a half years, still has no comprehensive plan for energy conservation, or a plan in order to ensure that people and businesses in this province will have a stable, affordable supply of energy as they move into the future. In fact, we're seeing this concern for this supply and affordability reflected as some of the jobs are lost in our province. We've lost over 80,000 jobs. We also know that, despite the investment made this week into the forest industry, we still continue to hear from people in the north about their concern about rising energy costs and the lack of this government in the development of any plan that will respond to those concerns.

So we have another bill, a bill that, at the end of the day, contains little in the way of detail. It has not been terribly carefully considered. It doesn't speak to how this is going to be funded and certainly, for some people throughout the province of Ontario, these smart meters are going to cause some financial hardship. Also, for some people, particularly tenants, they're simply not going to have any control over their ability to conserve energy and control their own personal costs.

What is happening in this bill? Well, the government has said they're going to install somewhere in the neighbourhood of 800,000 smart meters by the end of 2007. They want to make sure that, by 2010, 4.3 million customers in this province would have these meters. We know that the cost of these first meters is going to be somewhere in the neighbourhood of at least \$400 million. We also know that this cost is ultimately going to climb to somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$2 billion. We also know that this huge capital cost, this huge investment, has never had the opportunity to benefit from any cost-benefit analysis. We've also just heard from one of the other members that this technology is probably going to be changing over time. We could have a lot of obsolete meters in this province in very short order, and they're going to contribute to a problem for our landfill sites.

When people get these new meters, we understand that they're probably going to be charged, monthly, \$1 to \$3 for their use. Tom Adams, the executive director of Energy Probe, says that consumers are going to end up paying more for the new technology but have little to show for it. He says that right now, most consumers pay about 50 cents a month for their meters, and he believes that, with these new devices, that cost is going to increase to \$8. That is a tremendous amount of money for individuals in this province who are on low incomes.

I want to address some of the concerns that we have been hearing about. I want, before I do that, to quote—this was a quote from the Record, the Kitchener-Waterloo newspaper, on November 4, 2005, when Dave Martin, energy coordinator for Greenpeace Canada, said: "Don't get me wrong; I think time-of-use ... rates is a ... good thing ... but smart meters are not a substitute for real conservation programs."

I guess that's something we need to point out again and again. Despite the title of this bill, there is not, and has not been in the past two and a half years, any effort on the part of this government to encourage people to conserve energy. There have been no incentives; in fact, incentives that were there in the way of energy-efficient appliances that we put in place have been removed.

The other concern I have, as far as this bill and smart meters are concerned, is that there's nothing said here as to how we're going to educate the population. I agree that most people want to do what they can to conserve energy, but you also have to educate the public. You need to carefully articulate the purpose, you need to inform the public as to what these meters can and cannot do, and you need to provide some resources in order that individuals will understand the role of these meters. Certainly this bill doesn't deal with any of that; in fact, the information contained in the bill is quite sparse.

Now, in my community I have heard concerns, in particular from tenants. I want to go to a presentation that was made here to the committee regarding smart meters and sub-metering in rental units. This is an oral presentation that was made to the standing committee on justice policy with regard to Bill 21, and it was made on behalf of RENT. Now, you might ask, who is RENT? They're a group of people in my community. It stands for Renters Educating and Networking Together. It is a volunteer, proactive non-partisan group of concerned citizens who seek to improve the state of tenants within the region of Waterloo through education, organization and general representation.

These people came forward and made a presentation to the committee. They expressed some concerns about the proposal that has been put on the table by the government, and they go on to say that in every rental situation, tenants have neither the means nor the authority to make truly meaningful conservation changes required in their units. For example, they talk about the fact that they're not in a position to upgrade insulation, to do any structural replacement or to repair any draughty windows and doors, to repair or upgrade the heating system, to install programmable thermostats or to replace old appliances with new energy-efficient models.

They go on to say that this proposal on the part of the government to shift these rapidly rising energy costs to tenants penalizes Ontario's lowest-income tenants.

They talk about the fact that the burden will be on the tenants, who basically have no control over the upgrading of the energy efficiency of the building. They go on to say that, yes, a tenant could turn off a few lights. They could do their laundry at night, but we also know that in some buildings the laundry services are not available at night, so that's really not an option. It's very difficult for tenants to have any real control over achieving maximum energy savings or conservation, and I want to get that on the record.

They, of course, express concern about the fact that some of the hydro costs as a result are going to be downloaded to them and are concerned that, again, they

can't do anything about this. For example, they mentioned that if they have energy-guzzling appliances, they can't do anything whatsoever about changing that.

1600

So they are certainly concerned about their ability, and they do ask a lot of questions. They did make a presentation to the committee on behalf of the many people in the region of Waterloo that they do represent. They ask questions about sub-metering: "If sub-metering is allowed, how much will the sub-metering company charge for its administrative fees? What controls are in place for sub-metering and future fee increases?"

They are also concerned about demographics of tenants. For example, what about tenants working outside the home daily or living in Florida for extended periods during the winter? Are the tenants retired people or parents at home with children who will require more hydro usage because they are home through the day? Should these people pay more?

So I think you can see that, certainly, this whole issue of sub-metering and tenants is going to leave us with some questions that obviously need to be answered in order that the tenants and landlords of this province are both treated fairly and equally.

The other presentation that was made to the committee was made on behalf of a group called the Waterloo Region Community Legal Services. The presentation was made by Ms. Gay Slinger. Again, they are a community legal clinic. They're funded through legal aid. I want to point that out because, obviously, the people they assist are people who meet the legal aid criteria, and many of them are living on social assistance benefits, disability pensions—the unemployed, people working for minimum wage and, of course, seniors.

These are the seniors who are living on fixed, limited incomes, and they also have certainly expressed their concerns about the rollout of the smart meters throughout the provinces to the buildings, the multi-residential buildings, and also the use of sub-metering, which is going to allow landlords to unilaterally, they say, impose individual electricity billings on tenants. Often, this is going to be through private sub-metering companies.

Again, they support, like everybody else in this province, the need to conserve energy and reduce the consumption of energy. They also appreciate and recognize, as we all know we must, that we have to develop a culture of conservation. However, this bill doesn't speak to that.

They go on, then, to talk about the fact that they're concerned because tenants cannot simply shift using energy off to peak periods. They talk about the fact that it's not within their control to do so in any meaningful way to save money. That's a concern that they talk about.

They go on to echo the concerns of RENT, where they say tenants are not in a position to retrofit the buildings in which they live in order to garner any major or significant savings with respect to true conservation. They know that that can't be made. They can't make those changes. So they do want the government to distinguish

between the private homeowner and the tenant because, of course, private homeowners do have some ability to deal with drafty windows, they say, making upgrades to the home, dealing with issues like insulation, and also installing high-efficiency furnaces. However, we do need to keep in mind that all of those are costly initiatives. At the end of the day, obviously, there are going to be some cost-benefits.

She goes on and makes an interesting comment: "When I walked into this room over the lunch break"—she's now referring to the justice committee that was meeting—"it was empty at that time—it was stifling hot in here because you don't have the control"—meaning control for the heat—"in this room. In order to control your own heat, you had to open a window. So there's your heat going out the window."

She used that point to illustrate the fact that tenants are living with the same lack of control in their units. That's a good case, because today in this building many parts of this building are hot, and there is actually very little control that any of us has to make changes.

She goes on to say that tenants simply "do not have the ability to effect true savings," and that's all tenants, regardless of their economic class. You simply don't have the ability to do so. Again, that is a concern. She goes on to say that if you're going to speak to and deal with "meaningful conservation," we need to take a look at the energy efficiency of the entire building as opposed to the energy efficiency of just one unit. You have to take a look at the whole infrastructure of the building and, of course, you have to take a look at the appliances in the building. Again, many of those appliances are owned by the owner of the building, and there is nothing the tenant can do if those appliances are not energy efficient.

She goes on to say, "Understand that even if you've got a gas-heated building but it's not working properly—and that's not within your control either—that's when you start using your oven for heat and you start buying space heaters." Of course, that sends the electric bill even higher.

She talks about clients who are disabled, elderly or single parents, who are home all day. She says they don't have the same luxury as people who are going out to work, who can turn down their thermostat in the morning and come back from work and turn it up in the afternoon. They just are not in a position where they can sit in the dark all day, they can have the radio and TV off, they can turn down the thermostat if, in this instance, it is even individually controlled. Again, this bill does create some hardships for some of the people in the province who simply don't have the opportunity to benefit.

I think we can see here that, despite what the government says about this legislation, at the end of the day the government has continued to demonstrate throughout the past two and a half years that they do not have a plan for energy. There is a growing concern in this province. I hear it particularly from people in the business sector, people who create the jobs in Ontario. They continue to tell me, "You know, Elizabeth, you read about the jobs

we're losing in our community, the jobs that we're losing in the province of Ontario"—that is now over 80,000 jobs since January 2005—"but we want you to know that our business, despite the fact that we are still operating, is also suffering and our bottom line, obviously, is not where we would like it to be because of the escalating energy costs and because of the lack of any stable supply." As they're looking forward and trying to predict, it's difficult, because they have absolutely no idea what their costs are going to be one, two and three years out. So this becomes one of the factors that causes people who own businesses in this province to take a look at whether or not they can afford to stay here. It's one of the factors they need to look at. So I would encourage this government and this Premier to develop an energy plan, as opposed to going out and speculating about rolling blackouts this summer, because the people in this province deserve it and need it.

1610

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Questions and comments?

Mr. Marchese: I just want to say how much I appreciate the comments made by the member for Kitchener-Waterloo, and not just her comments but so many other comments made by Conservative members in general. I've got to tell you that when they're in opposition they really sound good. I think they need to stay in opposition a little longer because I think it's really helpful to the democratic process for the Conservative Party—of course, I hope the Liberal Party doesn't stay too long there. I suspect they're going to have a problem holding on to a lot of seats in the next election; that's another problem.

Interjections.

Mr. Marchese: That is another matter. I love the fact that some of the Liberal members feel so confident and arrogant, just like our government members did in 1995.

Interjections.

Mr. Marchese: No, but it can't happen to you, so don't you worry, not any of you. Don't you worry about re-election. You just sit there comfortable and cozy in your seats. Make sure you're occupying a permanent place in that seat because you're going to be there for a long time. Don't worry.

Anyway, my point was to my friend Mrs. Witmer from Kitchener-Waterloo. I appreciated most of her comments because they coincided with what we have to say, with what our leader has said, and I will agree, with much of what I will have to say when I make my remarks in the next five or seven minutes. She will notice that much of what I have to say is in agreement with what she's saying. I'm telling you, opposition is good for you.

Mrs. Witmer: I just don't want to stay here.

Mr. Marchese: I know you don't want to stay there too long, but it does feel good on all sides to hear your approach to this issue, particularly as it relates to energy conservation, because there's nothing there, and your comments around the smart meters, which we agree with.

Mr. Leal: As always, I have great respect for the comments of the member for Kitchener–Waterloo. She has a long and very distinguished history in this House, and I have great respect when she speaks on issues. But—there is a “but” here, respectfully. We talked about our initiative to educate people to push forward the notion of a conservation culture. We are supporting a wide range of initiatives to provide information for Ontarians on energy conservation. These include printed conservation materials, our website and call centre, community information forums, workshops and symposiums. We have adopted the powerWISE conservation brand, a partnership with Ontario’s six largest electricity distributors, to help streamline delivery of conservation information to Ontario electricity consumers. We’ve also established Ontario Conserves, an on-line source of advice, tips and information to provide and encourage conservation for Ontarians.

We’ve also worked with the Green Communities initiatives throughout Ontario. They provide the EnerGuide program, where they will go around and do audits on residential homes to give the owner a perspective of where they can spend some dollars to make their home more energy efficient. I’d like to emphasize one of the largest pilot studies in Ontario: Chatham-Kent, 1,000 smart meters, all-in costs of \$1.29, verified by a third party. Deloitte looked at their costs, verified their costs and indicated that there’s a substantial savings by introducing smart meters in the province of Ontario. It’s an—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Thank you.

Mr. Chudleigh: I notice the member for Peterborough didn’t mention what that substantial saving was. It might be interesting to know what that number is.

I must comment on the member for Trinity–Spadina as to his predictions for the next election. Something that I would point out to the members who are serving their first term: This man’s predictions have been extremely accurate over the time I have been sitting in this House. He seems to have a crystal ball that can actually see into the future, because it’s really, truly wondrous, the accuracy of these things he comes up with. I don’t know how you do it, Rosie, but I stand in awe.

Mr. Marchese: It’s divinity—or semi-divinity, if you will.

Mr. Chudleigh: That’s easy for you to say.

The member for Kitchener–Waterloo pointed out very clearly that this government is struggling to find its path on this particular issue. It was interesting that—

Mr. Marchese: What path?

Mr. Chudleigh: “What path?” says the member for Trinity–Spadina, and that may very well be another prediction that is very accurate. When they were running in the election, of course, they said they were going to maintain the price cap. Well, it’s a good thing to maintain a price cap when you have to develop a plan that you can go forward with. That’s why you would freeze something, like they froze university tuitions. Then they had to develop this plan. Well, as soon as they got into govern-

ment, they didn’t have a plan, but they broke their promise on the price cap. Off came the price cap, and up went the cost of electricity. That’s going to happen again with this bill, as was pointed out. Most of the power that you’re going to be using in your homes is no longer going to be at 4.3 cents or 4.7 cents or 5.4 cents; it’s going to be at 9.3 cents. So the price you’re paying for power is going to effectively double. The people of Ontario will understand where that doubling came from; therefore, the prediction.

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): In response to the comments from the minister—from the member—

Mr. Marchese: A former Minister of Health.

Mr. Patten: —former Minister of Health, probably the finest minister of the former government, the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, who, I must say, I really appreciate—and I think you epitomize the best of the role of opposition, and that is: pointing out what you feel are some possible problems with the legislation that people may be facing, and you back it up with anecdotal responses from your constituents, and that sort of thing. You don’t rave on, and yell and scream and condemn that the whole thing is rotten and there’s nothing good in the legislation. I want to acknowledge your quality of participation. I respect that.

I would say, though, that developing a culture cannot really be done simply through legislation, as I’m sure the member knows—and the member, by the way, from Trinity–Spadina, thank you for giving me this little bit of time; I appreciate that. The culture is not confined to this legislation. I had a conservation forum in my riding. I think the minister was encouraging any member who wanted to have one in their ridings, saying that there would be some resources and some help available. I’d be very happy to come to your riding and work with you to put on one of these forums, Ms. Witmer, and any other member as well. I would also say that the incentive, of course, for these smart meters is conserving money. The incentive is, if I can save on the costs of the utilities I have in my house, then this is going to go a long way toward paying for the unit itself, which has a nominal cost, and also cut down on the costs that I will be paying for electricity in my home.

The Acting Speaker: It’s time for a reply.

Mrs. Witmer: I want to thank the member from Peterborough—he always makes a very valuable contribution—and, of course, my good friend from Trinity–Spadina. I’ve spent many a time on committee with him, and sometimes we’ve agreed and sometimes we’ve disagreed, but we’ve always tried to hold the government accountable for their actions. I want to thank my colleague from Halton for his comments. He participates in many of the debates and makes, I think, a very excellent presentation each time he speaks; and of course, my friend from Ottawa Centre, for whom I have a tremendous amount of respect. Perhaps I’ll take you up and we could do an energy forum together in Kitchener–Waterloo.

Having said that, do you know what? I think what we're endeavouring to do, as we continue to discuss Bill 21, is obviously point out to the government some of the shortcomings of the legislation, to point out what comments we have heard from people in our riding, from people in the province of Ontario.

We all need to move forward with a desire to do what we can to create that culture of conservation in Ontario, but at the same time, I'll go back to what I said before. There is a desperate need for a plan for energy in the province. There is a lot of uncertainty, and certainly some instability. People need to be reassured that as they look to the future, there will be an adequate supply and there will not be blackouts and brownouts. They need to know that as they plan for their businesses, they can plan for their future.

1620

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Marchese: It's my pleasure to be here and debate Bill 21. It's a pleasure to offer an objective analysis of the Bill. The title of Bill 21 is An Act to enact the Energy Conservation Leadership Act. I will start with that because that will take some time.

What I want to say about this part is that if inaction is leadership, then the Liberals are leading, because what this bill does in relation to this, An Act to enact the Energy Conservation Leadership Act, is to actually not do anything. It does not prescribe anything. It does not force anyone to do anything. So how you can call this part of the bill An Act to enact the Energy Conservation Leadership Act is beyond me. That is why I said earlier in my remarks that it's delusional. You do little, and what you do is completely inadequate.

I want to start by quoting from the bill around schedule A, the Energy Conservation Leadership Act, as a way of indicating to you and showing to you, fellow citizens, who are watching at 4:25 on a Thursday afternoon that I don't make this up; it's in the bill. When you listen to what I have to say, I hope you will agree with me, even though I know Liberals do not, because they try to distort as best they can their own message.

Here on page 2, it says right from the very first page, literally, where it talks about definitions in the act, and then it goes to:

"Mandatory conservation practices

"2(1) The Lieutenant Governor in Council may, by regulation, require persons who are selling, leasing or otherwise transferring an interest in real property or personal property to provide such information as is prescribed in such circumstances as are prescribed."

Don't be perturbed, fellow listeners, by the language, because it's sometimes legal. What you need to pay attention to is the simple little words that say, "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may...." The member from Ottawa Centre has been here longer than I have. He understands this. "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may...." "May" does not prescribe. "May" does not say to anyone, "You shall do." It simply says—

Mr. Patten: We're more existential.

Mr. Marchese: No, it's not even existential. You are inventing that word; it does not apply here. The point is that "may" simply says maybe; maybe we will, good doctor; maybe we won't. The likelihood is we don't know, and the stronger likelihood is that it won't happen. If they wanted it to happen, it would not have said, "may"; it would have required them to do something. It usually would say "shall." The member from Ottawa Centre understands this because he is an experienced politician.

"Effect of non-compliance." It's the next item: "(2) A regulation may provide for consequences if a person fails to comply...." Michael, do you understand this?

Mr. Prue: Yes, I understand.

Mr. Marchese: It's not complicated, is it? "(2) A regulation may provide for consequences if a person fails to comply...." All the Liberal members in this House will understand this, because it's pretty simple. Even municipal councillors who have been here for a short while and other mayors who have been here for a short while will understand this, because it's pretty simple. Even municipal councillors and mayors who have been here for a short while will understand this, because it's not complicated. If you wanted it to have more effect, you'd say a regulation "shall" provide for consequences. It's a simple word. If you want to require them to do something, you say "shall." When you put the word "may," for the Liberals who are interested in listening to this, it means that you probably won't do it, very likely won't do it and you don't require anybody to do anything.

Page 3 of the bill:

"Notice of non-compliance

"(4) A regulation may provide for the manner in which notice relating to the non-compliance is given"—it may, but it won't. It shan't; it shall not; it will not. It does not require them to do it. You fine Liberal members who have been here for a while: You'll understand what I'm getting at. Those of you watching at home, I think you're getting a sense of the drift of the issue.

"Permissive designation of goods, services and technologies"

"3(1) In order to assist in the removal of barriers and to promote opportunities for energy conservation, the Lieutenant Governor in Council may, by regulation, designate goods, services and technologies." Again, to a couple of the Liberal members behind me in the so-called rump, they will understand this. You don't have to be a politician, you don't have to have a university education, I don't think you even need high school education to understand—

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): You don't have to be an NDPer.

Mr. Marchese:—David, the difference between "may" and "shall." You don't. When a parent says something to a child, "You don't have to do this if you don't want to. You may or you may not" versus "You shall," kids understand that. Teenagers understand that.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon (Scarborough—Rouge River): They may not accept it.

Mr. Marchese: They may not accept, but you understand the point. Bas understands the point, of course.

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): "You may not do that."

Mr. Marchese: "You may not do that." You may do that, you may not do that; you shall, you shall not. But you understand, member from Stoney Creek. We understand each other on this regard.

Let me go on. Same page, page 3:

"Energy conservation plans

"4(1) The Lieutenant Governor in Council may, by regulation, require public agencies to prepare an annual energy conservation plan or, if the regulations so provide, an energy conservation plan respecting such other period as may be prescribed." The member from Willowdale was asking this today to the minister, because he made the inference through his question that agencies are going to be required to do something. What this says is that the Lieutenant Governor in Council may, by regulation, require public agencies to require an annual plan. They don't have to; they may. They're not required to; there's no requirement to do anything. The member from Willowdale is a lawyer. He understands what I'm getting at. It is not so complicated, even for some here. I didn't want to say "even for lawyers."

Moving on, in terms of contents, "The plan must be prepared in accordance with such requirements as may be prescribed...."

Page 4:

"When acquiring goods and services"

"The Lieutenant Governor in Council may, by regulation, require public agencies to consider energy conservation and energy efficiency...." The member from Willowdale, who is a fine lawyer, I'm sure, would understand the language here that says "may ... consider energy conservation." It doesn't have to, is not required to.

Remember, this Bill 21 is called an Act to enact the Energy Conservation Leadership Act. You understand why it's amusing, right, why I mock you on a regular basis? I do so with great pleasure, because when you call it the leadership act, that's something the Tories would have done. When you were in opposition, we both relished the opportunity to attack the Tories in misnaming bills. When you do it, having learned from the Tories, it's a bit vomit-inducing, you know? I know that the good citizens of Ontario appreciate what I'm saying. It's vomit-inducing for you to have protested against what Tories did and for you to do the same. You know what I mean.

1630

"Court enforcement"—or did I skip some? Oh, there's so much more. "Agreements to promote conservation," page 4: "The Minister of Energy may enter into agreements to promote energy conservation and energy efficiency...." It doesn't require them, Bas. It may, but it doesn't require them to do anything.

"Proposal re order"—

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: I'm so happy that my fellow member at the back, the member from Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge, is enjoying this, because I'm here to please.

"Proposal re order

"(2) The enforcement officer may propose to order the person to cease committing an act or to perform such acts as, in the enforcement officer's opinion, are necessary to remedy the situation."

Those of you who are Liberal lawyers, I hope you're following this and are having fun. The rest of you who are doctors and others should enjoy this because, so far, what I'm reading into the record is not leadership but lack of leadership. It is inaction. Inaction, in my book, is never leadership.

Page 5: "Court enforcement

"(8) The enforcement officer may file a certified copy of an order made under this section in the Superior Court of Justice and the court may enforce the order in such manner as the court considers just in the circumstances." Again, it's "may," not "shall," "will."

I go on: "Designation of enforcement officer

"9. The Minister of Energy may, in writing, designate one or more persons who are employed in the Ministry of Energy to act as enforcement officers...." It may designate them, but it's not required to do so. You understand? I'm reading page after page of what may happen.

Mr. Patten: You didn't have time to write anything down.

Mr. Marchese: The member from Ottawa Centre, I beg your pardon. Are you interacting with me?

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: "The Minister of Energy may, in writing, designate one or more persons who are employed in the Minister of Energy to act as enforcement officers...." It doesn't even designate one. It doesn't even say, "We shall designate one person to do that." It might, it may, but it won't.

Mr. Patten: Maybe more.

Mr. Marchese: Yes, maybe more. Member for Ottawa Centre, come on. You've been here for a long while. You were here before me. Come on. "Maybe more."

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: At least you could designate one. Throw us a little crumb so we can say, "Oh, they're really serious; oh, my God. They're going to have one person to enforce." A little crumb, right? Not even one.

"Classes of persons, etc.

"(2) A regulation may create different classes of persons or entities and may establish different entitlements for, or relating to, each class," and it goes on and on.

I hope that I have objectively analyzed the bill for those of you who have not had the opportunity to read it because, if you do get a chance to read the bill, even though I read three quarters of that particular portion of it, you will see that it's not leadership. It's a laughable kind of designation to call this particular part of the bill "leadership in conservation." When your minister stands up day after day in that smug little way to say, "Oh, we're developing a culture of conservation," and then

you introduce this and you hide behind this and call it a culture of conservation, you leave the citizens of Ontario dismayed, in consternation, wondering what it is that you are creating by way of a culture of conservation. If anything, you're creating a crisis à la Monsieur Snobelen, so that you can say, "Huh, we are here as Liberals to keep the lights on." But good heavens, trying to talk about a culture of conservation when you've actually done so little—

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: The Don Valley West member is going to stand up here and defend her position and the minister's position on this. I hope she finds a couple of minutes to defend "the culture of conservation we have so well fabricated here in the Liberal ranks."

One individual from the Green Energy Coalition came before the committee. What do they say about this act? The first recommendation they make is to say, "We welcome an act, but you have to do something right up front and centre. You have to add a conservation first directive." Can you believe that the government would come forward with a bill they call the Energy Conservation Responsibility Act, yet nowhere in the bill is it made clear that it must be conservation first, before you go contemplating big nuclear or big natural gas? That's not in the bill. The bill doesn't say "conservation first," and that's why these groups are critical.

Jim Bradley, the House leader, understands these things. He has been here for so long that he knows the difference between "may" and "shall." He knows that. Any young person aged six and above understands the difference between "may" and "shall"—anyone. So I dare venture to say that 99% of the Liberal members understand the difference as well. I venture. I wouldn't wager my house on it, but I suspect that 99% understand the difference between "shall" and "may."

So I am waiting so anxiously for Liberals to stand up in their two minutes to at least rebut what I have said and to defend how, through this act, you are creating a culture of conservation—and to do so with a smile.

Just to continue on this: not much leadership here. There is the potential for energy conservation plans to be developed for public sector agencies but no details about when, and no details about what the plans would require. The language clearly says that they require nothing.

I want to talk briefly, because time is running out, on the smart meters. Howard Hampton, in committee—I was there as well—raised the question of how much it will cost the taxpayers of Ontario to install these smart meters. The estimates vary from \$1 billion to \$2 billion. I know you don't want to talk about that; I understand that. What I want to say to the citizens of Ontario is, you're picking up the tab. It's going to be on your hydro bill. The government is not paying for it. Many of the members from the rump are not going to be paying for it. Ministers are not going to be paying for it. McGuinty is not paying for it. You citizens of Ontario, taxpayers, are going to be paying for that. It's going to cost anywhere up to two billion bucks for construction, capital costs, to

install these smart meters. Do you know what, Ted? Howard Hampton, the leader of the NDP, in committee said to all the members who came, "Have you done a cost-benefit analysis?" They all said no—everyone who came forward. "Are you aware of a cost-benefit analysis that may have been done by the government?" Everyone said no. Everyone was asked, "Would you, if you were a businessman or businesswoman, do a cost-benefit analysis on these smart meters if the costs were to be anywhere from a billion to two billion?" and they all said yes. And this Liberal government introduces smart meters without any cost-benefit analysis? These fiscal conservative types—and I know 70% of the Liberals are fiscal conservative types—

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): Name names.

Mr. Marchese: "Name names." I wait for you to stand and name yourselves.

You introduce a bill without having done a cost-benefit analysis? I pay for it and you simply slough it off? We're not even talking about operational costs; we're talking about capital costs. When this has been done and where it has been done, particularly in California, we discovered that the savings were approximately 7% in terms of energy conservation. Look at the cost. Look at the cost without any cost-benefit analysis, and then you say to me, "Ha, we've got California as a great example of our \$2-billion expenditure, and we're not even talking about operational costs."

This is great for the companies that want to install meters, but I don't know how it's going to be good for the majority of people whose savings are only going to be what, Michael, a buck or two? I'm waiting for my good buddy Michael to give us an example of someone who has installed a meter. Her savings at the end of the month were \$1.50, \$1.27.

Mr. Prue: A dollar fourteen.

Mr. Marchese: God bless. And that individual is going to be paying about, what, \$600 for that meter? God bless. Savings of \$1.50—this is good politics. I am telling you, you Liberals are great leaders in nothing. If this is leadership, we are in big, big doo-doo, my friends.

1640

What you all want is to get into nuclear, you who introduced Darlington and cost taxpayers of Ontario \$15 billion at the time; it jumped to \$22 billion by the time we were in it and by the time the Tories were in it. You Liberals who initiated Darlington are now on your way to introducing yet \$44 billion worth of nuclear. You haven't even analyzed the problems of what you're going to do with nuclear waste—Britain has about \$150 billion worth—of how to decommission that very dangerous nuclear waste. You don't even know where to put it. It's dangerous if anything should happen, and the cost is astronomical.

You think it's good. You think this is leadership, as you talk about your culture of conservation, where you've done nothing. I have proved to you by my reading

of your bill that you have done nothing and will do nothing by way of energy conservation.

Mr. Patten: The only party in 30 years that has provided alternatives.

Mr. Marchese: I'm looking to the member from Ottawa Centre to stand up in his two minutes and rebut. I look forward with pleasure to the rebuttal from some of the Liberal members.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes, for questions and comments, the member from Stoney Creek.

Ms. Mossop: It's a pleasure to rise to speak to the presentation by the member from Trinity-Spadina. It's always a challenge too, because he's always so colourful and entertaining.

I have to do just a couple of fact-checking pieces here. It was the Tories who started Darlington, and by the time the Liberals came around, it was cheaper to finish it than to stop it, so just a clarification on that one piece there. Also, the NDP government did some absolutely magician-like work with the debt, doubling in five years what had been created from Confederation to the time they came to power. That's remarkable work. The other thing is that the NDP cancelled all funding for every conservation program there was at the time.

I sat through the public hearings on Bill 21. What I heard was that what we have in this province, in this society, is a culture of waste. We have to address it, and we have to be free to address it in many ways. We have to create a conservation culture, and we have to do it through education and we have to do it through tools. We are engaging generations of people who do not understand the responsibility for resources. People who have lived through the Depression, who have lived through wars, understand the need for responsible use of resources, but generations of people don't understand it. They had a jolt, if you'll excuse the term, when we had that blackout a few years ago, that all of a sudden that magic button was going to disappear. How could that happen? There is actually a need to have responsible use of our resources. We have to create that culture through many education programs, and we have to be creative in doing it. We have to engage young people, who look at the world differently than many others, through technology and through a number of initiatives.

I'm going to leave it there, but I would just remind them that it was the NDP that doubled our debt and cancelled all funding for conservation.

Mr. Chudleigh: I'll be looking forward to the member from Trinity-Spadina's response to that. I noticed he was taking notes, I say to the member from Stoney Creek.

I think the member from Trinity-Spadina is pointing out the same kinds of things that we've heard from this side of the House, that we've read in the press and seen throughout the debate on this somewhat contentious piece of legislation, that smart metering has an appeal to it, and if people understood how this fits into the government's overall plan, I think there might be a great deal of support for something that is going to help people

conserve. I think the problem is that there doesn't seem to be an overall plan. There doesn't seem to be something that pulls it all together.

We saw the freeze, we saw the price cap, we saw the promise to keep the price cap, and then the price cap came off. We've seen sporadic announcements for some energy generation. We've heard some rumours about doing environmental assessments east of Toronto for new nuclear plants. We have heard about the refurbishing of the Bruce plant, four units up there. We hear little bits and pieces, and there might very well be a plan in the background; somewhere back there, somebody might have a plan. But if you are governing the province for the benefit of the people of Ontario, I think it behooves you, and I think it is something the people of Ontario deserve, to know what that plan is.

Mr. Prue: As always, it is a pleasure to listen to my colleague from Trinity-Spadina. Not only does he give really excellent renditions; he is entertaining at the same time. But I listened to what he had to say about the bill itself. What he had to say, all of the members should listen to.

When the word "may" is used, it generally indicates that the office or the official, the bureaucrat who carries it out, has total latitude whether to do the actions contained therein or not. In this particular case, it falls to the Lieutenant Governor in Council. I listened to my friend from Stoney Creek. When she admonishes her son, saying, "You may not do that," I would suggest that although she may tell her son that, she should properly, if she is to teach her son good English, use the word "shall," because "may not" is grammatically incorrect.

Ms. Mossop: It's permissive.

Mr. Prue: No, it is not permissive. It is grammatically incorrect if you are telling someone that they are not entitled to do it. In any event, I'm sure she would not, nor would her party, use that in any kind of bill that we have before us. There is nothing in there that says you "may not" do it. It says that the Lieutenant Governor in Council may choose to do something, and then in all likelihood will choose not to do so.

My friend from Trinity-Spadina went on to talk about a number of things, and he ended up with the whole fiasco of nuclear. I would just like to comment on that for a moment. This government is embarking on a place where we ought not to be going. Most of the jurisdictions in the world are seeing that this is far too expensive and fraught with far too many difficulties. I do not believe the people of Ontario are prepared for the \$40 billion or so that this is going to cost. We are still paying for the expenses of the past. Please don't do it again in the future.

Mr. Leal: I listened very carefully and intently to the member from Trinity-Spadina. Again, the issue of the cost-benefit analysis has come up on several occasions. I want to reiterate, it's the old line: "My mind is made up. Don't confuse me with the facts." The facts are that the largest pilot in Ontario was completed by the LDC in Chatham-Kent. One thousand homes installed smart meters. They were able to retrofit the existing meters.

They acquired a technology that would allow them to do that. All-in costs were \$1.29. They achieved the targeted savings the LDC in that area had put forward as their program. Deloitte, whether you like that accounting firm or don't like that accounting firm, have verified all the dollars that were used during that pilot study of 1,000.

It is interesting that the member from Kenora–Rainy River never talked about that presentation, and he was with the committee when we visited Chatham–Kent. They just kind of sloughed that one aside, because that verifies what smart meters will allow us to achieve in Ontario.

During their term of government, from 1990 to 1995, conservation programs were out; the purchasing of rainforest was in. And that's fine; that was a political decision. They looked at the cost-benefit analysis of acquiring that rainforest in Costa Rica. Based on that cost-benefit analysis, I'm sure, they decided to get rid of the conservation program and acquire the rainforest in Costa Rica, on the advice of Maurice Strong, whom they hired at that time to provide strategic advice on that acquisition.

So if you take the time to look at the facts of the pilot studies that have been put forward in this area, the results tell you that smart metering is a smart initiative for the province of Ontario.

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The Acting Speaker: It's time for reply.

Mr. Marchese: I am pleased that the member for Stoney Creek finds me entertaining. I am pleased that the member for Peterborough also finds me entertaining.

I object to the member for Ottawa–Orléans saying that, "It would nice if he were factual." You will have noted, those of you who were listening, that I spent approximately 15 minutes talking about An Act to enact the Energy Conservation Leadership Act, and not once did Madame from Stoney Creek address or refute any of the points I made; not once did the member for Peterborough address or refute any of the points I made around there. They're very factual.

I was hoping that the member for Ottawa–Orléans, who said, "It would be nice for the member for Trinity–Spadina to be factual," had a comment to make by way of refuting what I said with respect to this particular act that I was reading from. I read from your bill. I didn't invent it; I didn't make it up. I read from your bill. I couldn't be any more factual if I read page after page of language speaking to "may" or "shall." There is no "shall." No one is required to do anything. Everything is "may."

So while the member for Stoney Creek talks about a culture of waste and that we must address it, I looked at this bill and I was wondering what she is doing. It's not there. There's nothing there. She says, "Oh, wouldn't it be nice to engage in education around conservation?" I looked at the bill to find education. It's not there. They invent things: "The NDP did this, the NDP did that. Oh, we're talking about education. Oh, there's waste. We have to fix waste." It's not here in your bill. I'm reading from your bill. These are the facts and you're unwilling to speak to the facts. So please, Liberal rump, stand up

and speak to the facts for once. It would do me a lot of good.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Zimmer: It's my pleasure to respond to the member for Trinity–Spadina. I know that the member for Trinity–Spadina stands over there, and whenever he speaks he looks into the camera and he has this expression that he addresses "the people of Ontario." He holds out his arms and he looks into the camera and he says to the people of Ontario, "Listen to me; listen to me." We often think of the member for Trinity–Spadina—yes, he's entertaining and yes, he's dramatic, but he has a problem with the facts.

We're not supposed to say unkind things about members opposite, so let me just offer this observation. I think the member for Trinity–Spadina has a truly interesting and, in many ways, complex relationship with the facts. Let's just leave it at that: that you have a very complex relationship with the facts. Perhaps with the appropriate counselling and so forth and so on you could resolve that complex and, in many ways, dysfunctional relationship with the facts.

What this bill is all about is asking the public, the people of Ontario, to be partners, to join with us in energy conservation. I just want to make a couple of remarks about the legislation. There are two parts to it: the Energy Conservation Leadership Act, which is one part, and the second part is a bunch of legislative changes that are going to support the smart metering initiative.

Let me just make a couple of comments about the conservation leadership aspect of it. What we're doing is encouraging the people of Ontario to join with us in this public exercise. We're all going to join together and do what we can in conservation. It's another important piece to our plan to build a conservation culture. I talked about that this afternoon in my question to the Minister of Energy.

What we're trying to do is lay a foundation for conservation culture and build on that conservation culture. I used the example of blue boxes in my question this afternoon. A number of years ago, the idea of everybody having a blue box for putting their garbage and bottles out just struck me as a bizarre idea. I thought, "That is really kind of trivial. We're going to have every home in the city and the province putting their bottles in a blue box and setting their bottles out." But a number of years later, the blue box culture is just second nature to us, the same way that it's second nature to us not to smoke in public places, not to smoke in people's homes. Well, the blue box culture has built on itself, and we now have green boxes for some things and we have grey boxes for newspapers. That has become a part of our culture.

Similarly, what this legislation is going to enable us to do is to lay the groundwork for that culture of conservation. I rather expect—and I say this to the member for Trinity–Spadina—that if we have this debate and we talk about this issue, 10 years from now these conservation culture ideas that are the groundwork of this legislation are going to be second nature to us all. They're going to

be second nature to you. I would urge you, five or 10 years from now, to play a tape of your remarks that you've been making this afternoon. You'll have to say to yourself, "I can't believe that I said that. I can't believe that I was so negative. I can't believe that I didn't have more confidence in the people of Ontario to get on the conservation culture bandwagon."

Now, the act and its leadership component, and then in the technical amendments to the legislation to enable the smart metering, are all feeding into that conservation culture. We've got to start talking about changing the culture of conservation because in the last analysis, we're the end-users of the energy—all of the members opposite, all of our businesses, all of our government buildings. Those government buildings and those businesses and our homes don't operate by themselves. They're not energy monsters. They've got human beings behind them. I and my wife manage my household, the member opposite manages his household. In the businesses, the building managers manage the buildings. In the individual citizens—in their minds, deep in their hearts—we have to instil the conservation culture. If we do that, I'm certain that we'll see dramatic results in the use—in the unintended, almost negligent, careless use of energy. To the extent that we can conserve that energy through building on a culture of conservation, we're all going to be the better. Conservation culture is a part of a greater gestalt. This legislation validates it; this legislation pushes us in that direction. This legislation says, "This is where we want to go." I invite the members opposite to join us in building that culture. Support this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mario Sergio): Questions or comments?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): Thank you to the member for the rendition on the bill. I guess my problem with the bill is not so much how it affects me but how it affects my people at home. I find that with the government legislation it's always very important to consult with the people at home as to what they believe will be the impact if this bill was passed.

Maybe the government could answer these questions in further debate on the bill. The other morning I was asked how much it was going to cost to put these smart meters in the home and who was going to pay for that. Of course, the answer is, "Well, we don't know what the cost is going to be. It can vary anywhere from \$1.25 a month to \$5 a month." Of course, we know that the users of electricity are going to pay.

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My friend Doug Holden says, "Well, explain to me, at \$5 a month for the meter and at \$45 a month for energy that I pay, how am I going to save that \$5 by getting up in the middle of the night to do my dishes?" He says, "It just doesn't work for people like that." If it's mandatory that he must take that meter and he's only using that much energy, it's not going to be a great conservation method. At the same time, how is it going to be good for him to be asked to pay \$5 a month in order to save less than \$5 a month in energy?

There are questions like that all over. A man who served most of his life on the PUC came into my office and said, "I don't know about this bill, this smart meter stuff. I don't see anything smart in what's being suggested in this bill. We have a metering system in the city of Woodstock that works wonderfully with pay-as-you-go. The meter actually shows how much power you're using and when you're using it. You pay for it when you buy it at the average price of what the generators are making." I think some of these things need to be looked at. We have to save people money, not make it cost more.

Mr. Prue: I listened, of course, intently, as I always do, to the member from Willowdale. I would gladly be persuaded by what he has to say about a conservation culture and about how all of us have to do our own thing, if only I thought that the government, of which he is a part, was doing its part around conservation.

I only have to go as far as the David Suzuki Foundation to find out what they're saying about your government and your complete lack of conservation on the entire energy file. The David Suzuki Foundation says three things:

(1) You need to "develop a climate change plan with ambitious GHG emission reduction targets," something that you have completely, within your first three years, failed to do.

(2) That foundation says that you have to "rely entirely upon conservation, energy efficiency and renewables for new power, rather than natural gas and nuclear power." You are embarked on a \$40-billion program of nuclear power, and you have enraged the citizens of my community by threatening to put in a mega-gas-fired plant on the Portlands, something that's going to destroy the dream of a generation.

The David Suzuki Foundation goes on: (3) "To implement policies to encourage the purchase of fuel-efficient vehicles and discourage the purchase of gas guzzlers." You've never talked about it. You've never done anything about it. You've never forced the automakers in Ontario or the imported car dealers to do anything about it. Then you stand here and talk about a system and a program that is going to have, at best, a minuscule effect.

I'm looking to the long term too. Anything we can do to save power is a good thing, but I am not convinced, with a cost of between \$1 billion and \$2 billion, that there's going to be real bang for the buck, something that is really meaningful that you could do if you only had the courage to undertake it.

Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): I'm delighted that the member who spoke previously to me raised the question about what we are doing as a government with our own buildings. I'm happy to review some of the things that we're doing.

In April 2004, the government announced a four-point plan to meet our target to reduce electricity in government buildings by 10%. We're upgrading our own facilities. We've got lease enhancements that require the government's private sector landlords to reduce energy use in leased spaces. We're engaging the public. We're

inviting citizens to help us attain our target. For example, we're asking people to report electricity consumption after 8 o'clock at night. We've asked our employees to help us out with this. We're engaging public servants in government-wide efforts to raise internal awareness.

The most important thing we're doing, though, is the building upgrades. The Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, through the Ontario Realty Corp., has identified several building upgrades and retrofit projects that include such initiatives as chiller replacements; lighting upgrades; building controls; heating, ventilation and air conditioning—HVAC—improvements; and the deep lake water cooling project in Toronto. The deep lake water cooling project will air-condition the Legislative Building, right where we are today, and other provincial government buildings in Queen's Park. That will save an estimated 9.8 million kilowatt hours. These projects are well under way. We're going to save, in total, 43 million kilowatt hours.

We are walking the walk; we're not just making promises. I think it's important that the people of Ontario understand that and that the member from Beaches—East York understands that as well.

Mr. Chudleigh: Conservation is a key word. The member spoke about the blue boxes and about how conservation gets into our society, in a way. I think that when the blue boxes were introduced, it was a voluntary thing. You could go down to the corner and pick up your blue box. You could use it if you wished; you could not use it if you didn't want to. This system that you're introducing is not that way at all.

You might be going into this system kicking and screaming but you're going in nonetheless, and that can be a problem when trying to implement a new way of thinking for society at large and society in general, especially when, along with this implementation of smart meters, the cost of electricity is probably going to double for most of the people in Ontario. The costs that you're talking about implementing, the costs that were in place for this year for the pilot projects—a maximum of 9.3 cents and a minimum of 2.9 cents were the costs that were in place for this year. When this program starts to be implemented on April 1 of this year, they're going to be readjusted upwards, and there is going to be a significant readjustment upwards.

Most of the numbers that I've been able to glean on the pilot projects—and I tell you, the information is not very easy to find—the information I've been able to find is that there might be a 2% saving. On a \$70 or a \$100 monthly electrical bill, a 2% saving doesn't pay the cost of the installation of the smart meter. So there are a lot of unanswered questions here, and even the pilot projects haven't been very well communicated.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Willowdale has two minutes to wrap up.

Mr. Zimmer: I want to thank the speakers.

The member from Trinity—Spadina referred to David Suzuki. He said that David Suzuki said such and such.

One thing David Suzuki did say and did push away at was this idea of conservation, conservation, conservation.

This government is showing some leadership in conservation. Let me remind members that we committed, as a government, to reduce our energy use in government buildings by 10%. I can report to this House that we've achieved that target. We're 70% towards achieving the 10% reduction. That's what leadership is all about.

We all have a part to play in conservation—however large, however small. I think it's time for the opposition parties to stop being negative on this issue and opposing. Any kind of conservation, any little bit of conservation, is worthwhile for each and every one of us, from whatever party, to join in. Become a part of the solution. I say to the members opposite, you can go to your homes and you can conserve just a little bit. This legislation helps—with the smart meters, for instance. If you can just conserve a little bit, that is an objective contribution. That's not just talk; that's not just opposing; that's not just carping about things that you're unhappy about in the legislation. Go home, put a smart meter in and save some electricity for Ontario. Join us in becoming a part of the solution. That's what this legislation is all about. It's about leadership. We're going to press forward with this. Join us; become a part of the solution.

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader):

On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Pursuant to standing order 55, I'd like to give the Legislature the business of the House for next week.

On Monday, February 27, in the afternoon, second reading of Bill 53, the Stronger City of Toronto for a Stronger Ontario Act; in the evening, third reading of Bill 21, the Energy Conservation Responsibility Act.

On Tuesday, February 28, in the afternoon, third reading of Bill 210, the Child and Family Services Statute Law Amendment Act; in the evening, third reading of Bill 36, the Local Health System Integration Act.

On Wednesday, March 1, in the afternoon, third reading of Bill 210; in the evening, government motion number 9.

On Thursday, March 2, in the afternoon, second reading of Bill 53.

ENERGY CONSERVATION RESPONSIBILITY ACT, 2006 (continued)

LOI DE 2006 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ EN MATIÈRE DE CONSERVATION DE L'ÉNERGIE (suite)

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Barrett: I welcome the opportunity for further debate and I do wish to make some comments on Bill 21, the Energy Conservation Responsibility Act.

I was very pleased that the Ontario Legislative Assembly, through the justice committee, saw fit—the decision was made by the subcommittee—to hold hearings in Simcoe. Hearings were held in the town of Simcoe in Norfolk county. We had a good selection of deputants come forward: agriculture for one, the Power Workers' Union and a couple of individuals. Although the deputants, when they approached the witness table, commenced with a presentation on the advisability or inadvisability of smart meters, another thing that really was ever present in the back of their minds and that did come out in their testimony was their concern for the impending closure of the very large Nanticoke plant, the co-generating station, which would be I guess 14 or 15 miles down the road from the town of Simcoe.

The Haldimand Federation of Agriculture kicked off the hearings. I've known the speaker, Frank Sommer, for a number of years. He is the backbone of the Haldimand federation. Frank made it very clear that he is concerned about justice and therefore felt it was very important to come into town from Kohler and address the justice committee. He reiterated something that we are hearing right across the province of Ontario, that our farmers, out of necessity now, have to compete globally, and the overriding concern for many of our farmers is access to power, specifically electrical power, at competitive rates. They request and put responsibility on this government to give "access to rates comparable to those in neighbouring jurisdictions." Corn alone, for example—we import that commodity from various states south of the border and from the province of Quebec. What's very important when you do any comparative analysis is you have to realize that whether it be an American farmer or a farmer in Ontario or Quebec, 80% of the input costs in farming today in one way or another are related to energy—not only electricity, but fuel. The cost of diesel is now very significant, especially in the cash crop sector.

Interjection.

Mr. Barrett: The member for Halton indicated, "What about fertilizer?" and the nitrogen component of fertilizer. We are very dependent on natural gas. Again, I would think in debate in this House, people now understand the price-supply relationship between electricity as a form of energy and natural gas as a form of energy and the relationship between these two. I hope to get into that shortly.

The farmers in our area, in their deliberations on Bill 21, don't necessarily dispute the alleged aims of this legislation: energy conservation. No one is arguing against that, or the potential for benefits of the smart metering of electricity, if that can be accomplished. There's interest in the ability of the conservation authorities to further exploit hydro-electric resources.

One thing that came out during the hearings in Simcoe—I know it made headlines. The member for Trinity-Spadina made mention of the cost. Howard

Hampton, when he was in the town of Simcoe during our hearings, made mention of the cost and threw out figures of \$1 billion to \$2 billion to put in the system. As with the NDP, we raised the question, where is that cost-benefit analysis? There is so much riding on the significance of energy, especially with respect to our economy. I think of the importance of a cost-benefit analysis for smart meters; I think of it in many ways as a risk-benefit analysis because there is an awful lot of risk.

The Haldimand Federation of Agriculture makes it very clear, speaking on behalf of farmers with neither the specific technical expertise or legal expertise to comment in detail on a piece of legislation like we have here today, Bill 21. They are concerned, as the member for Trinity-Spadina and those of us in the opposition are very concerned, that when the proposed measures are fully implemented, how much it is going to cost?

Later on during the day, we had a presentation from the CAE Alliance. The CAE stands for Clean, Affordable Energy. Their researcher, one of their main spokespersons, the chair of the alliance, is a woman named Carol Chudy. I've heard her speak a number of times, both in Simcoe and down in the Sarnia-Lambton area, where there is a very real concern about the inadvisability of shutting down what has been identified as the fourth- or fifth-cleanest coal-burning plant in North America and substituting natural gas, a fuel that now has been identified as being in dwindling supply. Some estimates indicate the commercial availability of natural gas may have a window of maybe only eight or nine years.

Carol Chudy addressed this issue of cost. With regard to cost, she indicated that "the Ministry of Energy" estimates "the installation costs to be about \$1 billion," but on top of that, maintenance and monitoring costs have to be factored in. I don't have those figures. The other important thing we should all bear in mind: "There is no net reduction in power" usage by using smart meters: "The Ontario Power Authority includes an estimated 500 MW for planning purposes." The point, and I want to repeat this, is that the overall "load is not reduced"; it's just used at different times; "it is shifted to less load-intensive times of the day," obviously in the evening, something that naturally occurs in my home. Part of my heat comes from electricity. I don't have air conditioning, but during the evening, we do turn the heat down. If I had air conditioning, and I think of the hot summer we had, it's natural for less air conditioning to be used in the middle of the night in the summer. Obviously, heating and air conditioning are two of the major contributors to the demand on our electricity supply.

Carol Chudy gave some figures: "The initial cost for the meter is estimated to be about \$500 for each household, plus monthly fees for monitoring and processing of information." This comes from energy experts. "The key word here is 'estimate,' because no firm costs and benefits have been determined.... In order to determine savings (or added costs), for affected ratepayers, as well as the province," a number of factors also have to be taken into consideration. The monitoring of smart meters

will obviously require the installation or the upgrading of telecommunications infrastructure. Again, that suggests continued upgrades at further cost to the consumer, whether that consumer, by extension, be the ratepayer or the taxpayer.

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Also, when we take a look at the cost of smart meters we have to factor in the cost of job losses to those who currently read meters. This must be factored into the overall economics. In communications that I've received from both Norfolk Power and Brant Power locally, and from the county of Brant, is the concern if these distribution companies were to lose the metering function, and if it is by extension transferred to the homeowner.

I made mention of Norfolk Power and I just want to continue on a little bit on the cost. If you farm in Haldimand county you are very cost-conscious. That is a tough place to farm; it's Haldimand clay. You can measure the economic history over the last 100 years; the population of Haldimand county is pretty well the same today as it was in the early 1900s.

Mr. Chudleigh: Tough going.

Mr. Barrett: Tough going, and it's tough to convince these farmers of some of the new ideas like this. They "are not convinced that all opportunities for incentives and persuasion for energy conservation have been fully exploited...." They are very concerned about what they consider a complete surrender "to the intrusive regulatory approach being proposed in ... Bill 21," and more specifically in schedule A.

They took a look at the description of schedule B in Bill 21, and they find it "difficult to visualize the final form in which the smart metering entity will emerge." They make the observation that, "The smart metering entity opens the door for the creation of yet another large and costly bureaucracy...." And it was just yesterday that we were debating LHINs, the local integrated health services network. Many of us took a look at the very large scope of these so-called neighbourhood networks. I know my neighbourhood, the LHIN 4 that my farm is in, is a neighbourhood of \$1.3 million. I have another piece of property, a hunting property, just a few miles away and it's in LHIN 2, and that's a neighbourhood that stretches from the tip of Long Point up to Tobermory. That's something like 400 kilometres. It would take six and a half hours to drive that distance. That suggests a very large administrative bureaucracy to administer.

By extension, what I'm hearing from Haldimand county farmers, through smart metering, is "yet another large and costly bureaucracy that could turn into an all-encompassing stand-alone organization with unprecedented powers to impact on" the everyday life of a Haldimand county farmer. The bill allows for the creation of infrastructure that is also pretty well guaranteed to be very costly, not only to install, but to maintain. "Given past experience with government mega-projects, costs are likely to be several times the current estimates." We have a \$1-billion cost estimate. We're hearing figures thrown around of double that amount. The suggestion is, "Per-

haps gentler, less coercive ways are available to provide the benefits of smart metering technology...." And the recommendation to the justice committee was to set it up on a voluntary basis. We leave it up to this government to make the final decision on that one, but that's one suggestion.

There is a concern "that Ontario may be embarking on an experiment...." This is coming from people down in the Haldimand and Norfolk area who went through a 25-year experiment with regional government. It probably seemed like a good idea at the time, back in the 1970s. Obviously, that was something that, while it was a gleam in a bureaucrat's eye, at the time seemed to make sense. There were projections for massive industrial growth in this county, which I made mention saw no population growth for 100 years. One off-the-wall projection was an increase in population of one million people. That didn't happen. It took my colleagues and our government when we were in power to terminate that particular experiment.

What I'm suggesting is that a very, I guess would say, conservative farmer down our way, speaking on behalf of a number of other very conservative, discreet Haldimand county farmers, is concerned about what they see as an experiment that may set them on a course that would put them on an even less competitive footing with their neighbours. When I say "with their neighbours," it's with their neighbours across the border and in Quebec. As I mentioned, I am concerned because we have figures now, whether you're farming across the border or in Ontario, that 80% of your costs, in one way or another, are energy-related.

Mr. Frank Sommer, in his testimony, had further suggestions and a number of measures that could be made to stave off the electricity supply crisis, which I think this government is now recognizing, and perhaps is reflected in what I consider some of the more draconian aspects proposed in Bill 21 on the demand side. The following measures were suggested to attain more cost-effective results, without what they say is a heavy-handed approach being proposed in this bill: "(1) A legacy dating back to the cheap electric power days of a generation ago has left us with thousands of homes that are still being heated by resistive electricity."

I know this for a fact. I built my own house with my father's assistance about 25 years ago. At that time, the Ontario government had a very significant advertising campaign. It convinced me to install electric heat.

Mr. Chudleigh: How did that work out?

Mr. Barrett: Well, I'll tell you, I have two wood stoves in my house now, and I just bought a third one. So how did that work out?

When you build your own home, you build a fairly large house. It was all two-by-six, and totally insulated. But I can tell you, apart from perhaps some of my colleagues who live in town, you don't get natural gas lines running out in the country. We have a number of gas wells on our farms for commercial production, but we can't get hooked up.

Interjection: Why not use solar?

Mr. Barrett: I'm relying on electricity to some extent. I spend so much time up here that I rely on my wife to bring in a lot of the wood. She can bring in a cord of wood in an afternoon; that's not bad.

The member opposite made mention, "Well, why not solar?" I built my own house; I built a passive solar home.

Again, coming from the Haldimand farmers: "(2) A natural gas distribution network in rural Ontario, allowing conversion from electricity would increase the energy efficiency of the province immensely." Again, it's much more efficient to do your cooking and heat your home with natural gas than to use electricity. Natural gas is a really valuable commodity. I am concerned if we are going to run out in eight or nine or 10 years, as some of the deputants informed us during these hearings.

Let's take a look at the supply side: "The premature commitment to phase out coal generation of electric power is in no small measure responsible for the expected supply shortage." I can tell you, knocking on doors this summer during the heat wave, there were a number of people at home who were expecting a shortage. They knew their electricity was coming across the border. We share the same airshed. They could see the pollution coming across the border. We're right down on Lake Erie. The southern end of my riding is the Pennsylvania border. Granted, it's out in the middle of Lake Erie, so we're 40 miles across, but we are probably the front line as far as being downwind from the Ohio Valley.

1730

On the supply side: "(2) While we agree with the objectives to reduce emissions of coal-fired electricity generation, we are not convinced that leading-edge technology for reductions have been fully explored." Again, everyone in this Legislative Assembly is now aware of the clean air technologies that are available and have been installed on many of the units, certainly at the Lambton-Sarnia plant. Two SCRs have been installed down there, the selective catalytic reduction units. Two selective catalytic reduction units have been installed at the gigantic Nanticoke plant. Sarnia-Lambton has the scrubber technology, which allows them to remove virtually all of the sulphur from their coal. They use a higher sulphur content coal. Nanticoke ships in coal from Powder River basin in the American west, a very low-sulphur coal. This is not to say that this government should not have the wherewithal to continue to add scrubbers and continue to install the selective catalytic reduction.

I'm looking at you, Speaker. Have I run out of time?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Yes. It's time for questions and comments.

Mr. Prue: I listened intently for the entire 20 minutes. It was a very good speech. There is much of what you have said with which I can agree, and I'm going to talk about one thing you said with which I agree, and then another where I, quite frankly, have some very real difficulties.

That part with which I agree was around the discussion you had about Carol Chudy and the costs she said would likely be borne by this government in terms of installing smart meters throughout the entire length and breadth of the province. I have yet to see a cost-benefit analysis from this government, and I am surprised that any government would contemplate the \$1 billion to \$2 billion that it has estimated it's going to cost to equip each and every home in this province. I'd like to see what that is because it takes a long time for people to pay back \$1 billion to \$2 billion. That is an awful lot of money, even for the 13 million people that we have in this province. For the number of households and the number of homes, that is even more.

I have heard that it's only going to cost \$1.50 or \$1.60 per month on your electricity bill, but I haven't heard how long that's going to take. Is that for 10 years, 20 years or forever? If it's forever, \$1.60 per month forever seems to me to be an awful lot of money to spend. I have to say that I have not heard—even though we've asked several times—how much money was saved in that study. The one piece of evidence that I saw, which was a news clip, showed that the woman, after having been on the system for a month, after having gotten up after midnight to do her laundry and her washing and everything else to save the money, saved \$1.14. I'm going to talk about that in my own speech. So if it costs \$1.60 and you save \$1.14, I don't think people are going to be very happy with the conservation.

The second point—and I've got five seconds—is coal-fired generation. I really think that the Conservatives should get off that wagon.

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): I remember as a consulting engineer going around to municipalities and having those big arguments about whether we should have water meters: "Everybody can waste as much water as they like or use as much water as they like," etc. Electrical meters haven't changed in probably 50 or 60 years. Now these smart meters are available and other countries are bringing them in. Energy conservation is extremely important, so it's time to get on the bandwagon and to move ahead. This legislation permits our provincial government to do that. It's extremely important legislation. A smart meter in every home will certainly bring conservation to the attention of every home in Ontario. The savings will certainly be there. It's been proven in other jurisdictions and will certainly be shown in our own.

I'm also proud of what the government has done to date in reaching the objectives they set for 10% energy savings. That's extremely important. We're 70% of the way, and this is just a little over two years into our government. That 10% savings is coming through looking at energy as a very important resource, as a resource we must conserve. As has been stated by the former Minister of Energy and the present Minister of Energy, every kilowatt saved is just the same as building new generation.

We are on the right track. This is the right direction to go. Energy conservation will become something important to every Ontario home, and we will achieve the objectives we've set. We will have energy self-sufficiency in this province, something that we haven't had for many years because of the decisions of previous governments. But this government is moving ahead with the right decisions, and certainly the smart meters are part of that.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): I'm pleased to be here in the House and listening to this debate. It's very interesting indeed. I just wanted to comment on the comments made by my friend from Beaches–East York and, indeed, my friend from London North Centre, coming before and after the speech from my friend from Haldimand–Norfolk. The member for Beaches–East York talked about the fact that there is no answer to the question of how long it might take to pay back the amount of money he talked about, the billions of dollars.

I worry even more about a question that comes before that, which is that when the minister had her press conference announcing this bill—again, it was one of those press conferences held with great flourish and great fanfare—she didn't even know what the number was, let alone how long it was going to take to pay it back. Even to this day, when it's weeks and months after the press conference, and the meters are supposed to be installed shortly, there are no specs out there for anybody to build these meters or to supply these meters to the government. There are no details. She had no details when she made the announcement.

This is a government that's very long on being able to make the statements of what they're going to do and they're going to have millions and thousands of meters, but when you say, "How much is it going to cost people? How long will it take to pay them back? Is that a good deal for people? Do we even know what the total number is that's going to be paid back?" there is no answer.

Similarly with the comments from my friend from London North Centre. The fact is that if you said to the minister, "How many buildings are being retrofitted? Where are they? How many new lighting systems have been put in?" I suspect the fact would be that the statements made by the member for London North Centre suggest that there are a lot more of these projects going on than is in fact the case. There are probably very few. This government talks a good game on these kinds of things. They're big on the PR, they're big on reading you back segments of the plan, but when it comes time to actually be accountable for how much the meters are going to cost, how long it will take to pay them back, what benefits they will have, how many buildings are being retrofitted, how many new lighting systems have been put in, they're suddenly bereft of any answers, and that speaks to the greatest question of all about this government, which is a lack of real accountability. People want to know those answers because it's their money and it's their life, and this government is unable to provide them.

Mr. Chudleigh: To the point: My benchmate made a wonderful speech and much of it revolved around listening to Haldimand county farmers and to the wisdom that comes from those men of the soil. I mentioned to him after his speech that you won't go too far wrong listening to people who consider their crops, who consider their lives, who consider what they're going to do very, very carefully.

Their concern about natural gas and how long that natural gas is going to be available in Canada, estimates of eight to 10 years out—I hope that's a little short. I hope natural gas will be around for a bit longer than that, given the infrastructure that we have built around that commodity. I can well remember estimates back in the 1970s—maybe it was the 1960s—when people were talking about natural gas. We had so much natural gas in this country, it was going to last for 300 years. I well remember 300 years of natural gas. Now we're getting estimates of eight to 10 years. It's difficult, when you get such huge variations, to know what you're going to do with the infrastructure that is built around that.

Again, the member for Haldimand–Norfolk mentioned that a good cost-benefit analysis has not been done on this issue. We've heard so many times that people would have far and away more expense than they would have savings, and that's of deep concern around this piece of legislation.

1740

The Acting Speaker: It's time for a response.

Mr. Barrett: I appreciate the comment from the member from Beaches–East York. It is quite heartening to hear an NDP member talk about cost-benefit analysis and trying to achieve savings. I will repeat that, I find that quite heartening.

The member from Ottawa–Orléans made mention and reminded us that he is a consulting engineer. It's interesting that after the hearings in Simcoe I sat down that evening with about 30 engineers and technicians, Power Workers, Steelworkers, people who are in the business. Not all of them testified before these hearings and I just think there's an awful lot of weight that needs to be put on the science and technology of these kinds of issues.

The member from Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey—the one phrase that comes to my mind from his response is, "People are looking for answers." People down my way did a lot of work to prepare for these hearings and they have some answers.

The member for Halton made mention of the Haldimand county farmer, and whether that person be male or female, we do have to listen to that kind of grassroots input. My grandmother was very strong in the Women's Institute movement. She would go to a Women's Institute meeting just down the sideroad from the north end of our farm, the Marburg Women's Institute, with some great ideas that she had probably read about. She would come home at night, after being shot down, and say to me—my grandmother was a bit of an activist—"Never, ever underestimate the wisdom of a farm woman."

I appreciate, as I said, that the Legislative Assembly did hold hearings in a small town and got some rural input, and I hope that's listened to.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has assented to certain bills in his office.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Todd Decker): The following are the titles of the bills to which His Honour did assent:

Bill 27, An Act to amend the Arbitration Act, 1991, the Child and Family Services Act and the Family Law Act in connection with family arbitration and related matters, and to amend the Children's Law Reform Act in connection with the matters to be considered by the court in dealing with applications for custody and access / *Projet de loi 27, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur l'arbitrage, la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille et la Loi sur le droit de la famille en ce qui concerne l'arbitrage familial et des questions connexes et modifiant la Loi portant réforme du droit de l'enfance en ce qui concerne les questions que doit prendre en considération le tribunal qui traite des requêtes en vue d'obtenir la garde et le droit de visite.*

Bill 206, An Act to revise the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System Act / *Projet de loi 206, Loi révisant la Loi sur le régime de retraite des employés municipaux de l'Ontario.*

ENERGY CONSERVATION RESPONSIBILITY ACT, 2006 (continued)

LOI DE 2006 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ EN MATIÈRE DE CONSERVATION DE L'ÉNERGIE (suite)

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Prue: I can see that I have again a truncated period of time here, so I'm going to try to do it as quickly as I can and hopefully finish my speech in less than the 20 minutes so that it won't come back on a second day.

I want to talk about the cost-benefit analysis for a moment, because I think that is key to what we are looking at in this particular piece of legislation. It is trite to say that every single one of us agrees that we have to do more to conserve. We have to conserve energy. We have to conserve our resources. We have to stop being wasteful. We have to do everything within our power as a government or as individuals to make sure that we do not squander the wealth of this planet and certainly of our Ontario and this Canada within our lifetimes. It has to be made available into the future for our children and our children's children.

Having said that, I want to know how this metering is going to accomplish that before I can wholeheartedly say I support it. The reason I have some doubts is, number one, there is no cost-benefit analysis. It's been said by other speakers and it's been said by me. I know that in my house, before we go out and determine whether it's time for a new refrigerator, a new car or a holiday, we look at the cost, we look at the benefits that are going to be derived from it, we see whether we can afford it and we see whether in the long term something else can be done that's cheaper. I am not ashamed to say that sometimes I buy used goods because used goods can be half the price and can service me for my entire lifetime. I do that because we have to know what is being spent and in the end whether we are getting the value that comes from it.

I haven't heard that. I haven't heard from any government person how much this is going to cost. I haven't heard it from the minister and I haven't heard it in debate, and I've heard all of the debate either by sitting in the chair or being here in this room. I have yet to hear a single person outline the cost of providing five million or six million or 10 million of these units across Ontario. I'm not sure how many households, how many businesses, how many structures, how many buildings or how many government offices there are, but there are a lot. Whether that number is seven million or eight million or 10 million, I don't know. I don't know how much it's going to cost to put all of this in, nor do we have any idea how much the average saving per household is going to be.

Ms. Wynne: We have to start, Michael.

Mr. Prue: The question is, we have to start. I'm going to get to that in a minute.

Ms. Wynne: No, it's a statement. We have to start.

Mr. Prue: I'm going to get to that in a minute—we have to start.

I have to know whether or not the potential is there for savings before I will recognize or support the expenditure of potentially billions of taxpayers' dollars. I have to know that there is a reasonable opportunity to expect that the money can be saved.

The reason I'm squeamish, the reason I question this is because for a while, for some of five years, I was a hydro commissioner. I served on the board of East York Hydro, as it existed prior to amalgamation. I spent five years sitting weekly in company with an engineer, an accountant, a couple of hydro commissioners and other people, sitting around a table trying to make hydro work. We tried to make it cheap, we tried to make it plentiful and we tried to do whatever we could for the community to make sure the service was provided.

One of the very laudable goals we had was to put in smart meters. We put in smart meters in East York. I still remember that one of those smart meters went into the home of Jack Christie. Jack Christie was the chair of East York Hydro. He was a man at that time well into his 80s. He is in his 90s and is still alive today. I'm sure he would like to come down and tell the people in the Legislature

the experience that East York hydro had with the smart meters.

I will acknowledge that the technology of 10 and 15 years ago that was installed in Jack Christie's house may not be the technology of today, but I will tell you that the technology then and the cost then was kind of expensive. It was expensive to put in these smart meters. We put them into Jack Christie's house and into four or five other people's houses, people who agreed to put them in, not to have the cost of their electricity reduced but simply to see how much electricity we could use and whether we could shave off that portion in peak demand, because that's really the important thing for the electrical system. It's not how much electricity you're using, but that the reality is that you're not using it when the peaks go too high. Those peaks are primarily in the summertime, with a secondary peak around the Christmas period. Those are the periods about which we must worry as a province, because when the blackouts and the brownouts occur, they are likely to occur at those points.

We put in the smart meters to see whether we could cut the peaks and lower the cost of electricity overall, by convincing people to do their laundry, dishwashing, heating and any number of things that were electrically generated at those times. Jack Christie came back month after month and we had discussions around the table at the East York Hydro-Electric Commission about the efficacy and the desirability of continuing the program and how much it was going to help. I have to tell you that the results were disappointing. The results were disappointing from Mr. Christie and from some of the others, although I think Jack was the person who was most likely—and his wife at the time. She has since died; a wonderful woman. They were keen, even though they were in their 70s at that point, to go out and do the laundry after 10 or 11 at night. They were keen to do the dishwashing late at night. They were keen to turn off the air conditioners. He had a heat pump. He tried everything. He was keen to shave off as much electricity as he could. We found out in the end that, yes, he was successful. He used almost the same amount of electricity overall, but he was able to cut those periods in the day, particularly between 3 and 5 o'clock or 3 and 6 o'clock, when the majority of electricity and the peak hit in East York.

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We discovered, though, that although he cut the peak for us, the savings that he made as an individual homeowner, and those of the other five or six people who were on board doing it at the same time, were negligible. The reason I'm saying that is because I haven't heard how much is being saved or how much was saved in those 1,000 families. Although I've asked, I have yet to hear anyone stand up in this Legislature and detail how much was saved.

The only piece of evidence that I have to date was a CBC news item on this very issue. I watched it intently; it was about a five- or seven-minute news clip. They catalogued a woman over the period of about a month

with a smart meter. They showed her doing her laundry at night. They showed her getting up early in the morning and turning on the dishwasher and the other electrical appliances. They showed her using all of the electricity at appropriate times when the costs were down, when the cost per megawatt hour was at its minimum. And they showed, at the end of the month, her getting the two bills, because that was part of the plan: the one bill as if she had not done it all of this time, and the other bill when she carried it out and did her very, very best over that period to do the right thing. When she opened up the bill on the news, you could see the disappointment on her face. She saved \$1.14 in the month; she saved \$1.14 by putting the kids to bed and doing her laundry late at night, by waking up early in the morning and by doing a hundred things.

What did she say? She was disappointed about the \$1.14, but she said she would do it because she believed she had an obligation to her children and the environment. But I have to ask you: She saved \$1.14. How much is she going to have to pay for the meter? We've heard \$1.60.

Mr. Leal: It's \$1.29.

Mr. Prue: All right. We've heard \$1.29 that you pay to have the meter, and \$1.14, after doing all the work, that you save, which means that it costs you 15 cents in the end. It means that people will have literally no economic incentive to want to do this. They will have to pay the \$1.29 literally forever, because there does not seem to be an end to the program, and if they stay up late at night to put the laundry on and get up early in the morning to take advantage, they will have to literally change their lifestyles to lose 15 cents a month.

I cannot believe that the public will be hugely interested in this. There has to be a better way. What I'm telling you is, I am not opposed to putting in the meters, but you have to detail how much it's going to cost and, in the end, how much money is going to be saved for the average consumer. I do not believe that a great deal can be saved, quite frankly, from my own experience in East York from individual homeowners.

Where we did find there were great savings was in some of the industrial applications. Remember, in this province even today, 80% of the electricity is used by about 20% of the people who get it, and 20% of the electricity is used by the other 80%, which is ordinary people living in their houses, primarily.

We need to do things that are going to save the money, and perhaps the smart meters might be very useful in industrial-commercial applications. I want to tell you that the government should go there first. We should go there and find out how much money can be saved. If the money can be saved, if the cost of the equipment comes down, if it does not become cost-prohibitive and actually cost more than the savings, which is, I am afraid, what is going to happen, at least at the outset, and make a lot of consumers angry, then I think—

Interjection: Lower the expectations.

Mr. Prue: Yes, you will lower the expectations. You will lower it to say that this is just another government boondoggle that doesn't work, and have people reject it. You have to do other things.

I listened to what the member from Kitchener-Waterloo had to say—I think it needs to be talked about as well—about the costs to tenants. Tenants right now largely are unmetered. There are metered tenants. I know, because we did that in East York too. We metered tenants, and we found out that the metering of tenants did in fact save the landlord some money. But the tenants bitterly complained about their lot in life, because you see, they could not replace the energy-inefficient refrigerator. That was the landlord's responsibility. The landlords saw fit not to do it, but to charge them the electricity for running an antiquated refrigerator and/or an antiquated stove and/or antiquated air conditioning. They charged the tenants when they plugged in space heaters because of drafty windows, because of leaky roofs. None of those things were within the power of the poor tenant to resolve.

If you're going to put, and you're going to advocate putting, these kinds of meterings into apartments, I want to tell you that before you do that, you had better pass a bill that requires every landlord in every multi-residential apartment unit in this province to replace those 20-year-old fridges, to replace those stoves, to replace the air conditioners, to fix all the drafts and the windows, and to fix the leaky roofs and anything else that is not energy efficient, because only then should the poor tenant have to succumb to what you're trying to make them do.

They have no choice. Most tenants are not rich people. There are some exceptions. I have some apartments in the former East York that are renting for \$2,000 a month, but most of them are rented for \$1,000 or less. The people who live in them are not rich, and they cannot afford, nor should they pay—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Pursuant to standing order 37, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made. The member for Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Premier concerning the local health integration networks. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to allow the parliamentary assistant to the Minister

of Health to reply to the notice of dissatisfaction issued by the member from Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? It's agreed.

The Chair recognizes the leader of the official opposition.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): I was so dissatisfied with the answer—there are many answers one could be dissatisfied with; in fact, there are no answers at all to many of the questions that are asked in this House, and I think that really stands in the way of the kind of accountability people have the right to expect in this House.

I was asking questions today that I think are important and that go to the very heart of the LHIN legislation, because the LHIN legislation is presented over and over again, and promoted over and over again by the Premier, the Minister of Health and the members of the government party as being something that is going to in fact turn over more responsibility and give more responsibility and more say to the local people. My questions have been very simple. They have been questions that have gone to the essence of the claim made by the government members that local people will have more say. All I ask is this: If they're going to have more say, to go back to the first question I asked the Premier today, why does this bill give his minister, or any Minister of Health, the power, for example, to override, without a hearing, without any checks or balances, and accountability agreements can then be imposed on these LHINs? Why does the minister get to decide that, if this bill is all about giving power to people at the local level?

The answer that was given was that the Leader of the Opposition “is sorely mistaken in this regard. Our made-in-Ontario model will empower local communities,” and on and on it goes. In fact, if you look at the bill, the section of the bill expressly says that without a hearing, without anything else, the minister can just order that his idea of an accountability agreement is the law. That's it. What kind of local decision-making, what kind of local influence is that?

So then I moved on to ask the question about section 28. Section 28 is the section that allows the minister to issue integration orders. They called it “integration orders,” I think, to try and cover up what it really was. But if you look at that section, it talks about the fact that the minister can issue an integration order, for example, ordering that a hospital be closed; I think I've got the section number right.

I asked the Premier, “Well, why, if you are not planning to close any hospitals, would you have to give your minister that power?” For that unilateral power, again, to be exercised, I think he has to get advice from the LHINs. We all had a little chuckle today. I think the leader of the third party asked a question about, “What kind of independent advice are you going to get from the people that you hand-pick yourself to advise you?” In this case, all he has to get is advice, but he can then, regardless of what that advice is, issue an order closing a

hospital or amalgamating a hospital with another one—no public hearing, no oversight by cabinet, no nothing, just an order from the Minister of Health.

1800

Again, if the purpose of the bill is to give power to local people to make decisions in the best interests of their local region, why is the minister now getting this power? I asked the Premier this question, and he said to me, in this instance, that I must be wrong in making the assertion that they are creating this power, because he said, “Well, how did the previous government close hospitals if the power didn’t exist in the present law?” This was a source of great dissatisfaction to me too, because it proves the Premier has not read the legislation and doesn’t know what the current law is that his government is proposing to change. I think when he comes into this House, I would say with respect, he has an obligation to be informed on these matters.

The fact of the matter is—I was discussing it with the media outside—that today, in the legislation, in the Public Hospitals Act as it exists today, there is no power that is equivalent to that giving the minister the right to issue an order closing a hospital; there is no power today in the law. That is a fact. The Premier indicated to me that I was mistaken or I was misinformed or whatever, and then he suggested that the hospitals that might have been closed in some previous day were closed illegally.

Again, I’m dissatisfied with that because I think that if the government wants to bring forward legislation bringing about what I believe to be the biggest centralization of power in the history of the Ministry of Health, if they want to do that, that’s fine; we can all come here and debate that. But don’t do it under the guise of creating some mechanisms and some bodies that are supposed to empower local citizens, and then have the bill filled with clauses that give unilateral, arbitrary, unchecked power to the Minister of Health, which is exactly what they’ve done. He can close hospitals, he can cut off services and he can amalgamate hospitals unilaterally, without a hearing, without anybody knowing anything about it.

Almost the worst example of all to me, as someone who spent years of my life raising millions of dollars for the hospital sector in this province, is the fact that he can issue an order, under section 30, transferring a charitable gift that someone has given directly to a particular hospital to some other hospital somewhere else. He can just do that—no hearing, no consultation with the donor and no court approval, which is the case today. Under the law today, it would have to be done through the courts.

I say to myself, what kind of decentralization is that? What kind of regional decision-making is that? It’s wrong. They’re misleading people when they say it’s about local decision-making. It’s all about centralizing power in the office of one man, the Minister of Health, and that is wrong too. It’s absolutely, positively wrong, and they’re not being straightforward with people when they suggest otherwise.

The Acting Speaker: In reply, the Chair recognizes the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health.

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): I’m pleased this evening to rise and respond to the concerns that have been raised by the leader of the official opposition with respect to Bill 36. My understanding is that the leader of the official opposition is in fact a lawyer, although we recognize that he hasn’t practised for many years. But I will happily take him through the legislation and the history of this legislation in order for him to completely understand what it is that we are trying to do here with Bill 36.

As you may recall, back in 1995 the Mike Harris government introduced the Savings and Restructuring Act. It was introduced by the Treasurer of the time, Ernie Eves. It was passed in 1996. Under the Savings and Restructuring Act, the minister was given the broad power to fund hospitals in the public interest. The minister was also given the power to reduce, suspend, withhold or terminate funding to a hospital if the minister considered it in the public interest to do so. These amendments also permitted the minister to direct hospitals to cease to operate, to provide specified services, to cease to provide specified services, to increase or decrease the extent and volume of specified services, to take all necessary steps required for a hospital amalgamation, or to make any other direction if, in each of these cases, the minister considered it in the public interest to do so.

Here is where we differ very much from the previous government: The regulation also authorized any person, group of persons or body to issue directions in the place of the minister, subject to any prescribed conditions. That created the Health Services Restructuring Commission. As we well know, they crossed our province in the mid-1990s and created havoc in our health system. Many of you will recall that they ordered the closing of not one, not two, but 28 hospitals in our province. Among them, they closed the following hospitals: Brantford’s St. Joseph’s Health Care System; the Northumberland Hills Hospital; the St. Mary’s Hospital in London; the Perley Hospital in Ottawa; the Ottawa Salvation Grace; the Pembroke Civic Hospital; the Peterborough St. Joe’s general hospital; the Toronto Central Hospital. I could go on. It was a litany of hospital closures under that government. They seem to suddenly forget how that happened.

In 1999, there was an amendment to the Public Health Act. However, the powers that were created under the Savings and Restructuring Act were maintained under section 6 of the Public Health Act for those hospitals that were affected by the restructuring commission. So, Mr. Tory, I would suggest that you may want to go back and look at section 6 of the Public Health Act, which stands today and which gives the minister the powers that I have listed under the Savings and Restructuring Act of 1995. It’s still in place. It’s still very clearly there.

Under section 28 of Bill 36, our legislation, An Act to provide for the integration of the local system for the delivery of health services, we note that “After receiving advice from the local health integration networks involved, the minister may,” and the previous speaker has outlined some of the powers that the minister may

enlist. However, it is after receiving the advice of the local health integration network. That advice is outlined, and the plans that are put in place in order to create transparency—a word that I know the official opposition is not familiar with—and accountability are set out in sections 14, 15 and 16 of the act.

I would invite the leader of the official opposition, if he'd like, to take a look at the legislation under section 14. We provide for the creation of a provincial strategic plan: "The minister shall develop a provincial strategic plan for the health system that includes a vision, priorities and strategic directions" for the plan. Under section 15: "Subject to subsection 16(1), each local health integration network shall"—that's each network—"within the time" decided by the minister "develop an integrated health service plan for the local health system and make copies of it available to the public at the network office."

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): Transparency.

Ms. Smith: There is transparency. They have available the plan.

Not only that, but section 16 of the act—again, I say to the leader of the official opposition, if he'd like to follow along—outlines the obligation for community engage-

ment, a concept, I know, very foreign to the official opposition but very familiar to our party and our government. "A local health integration network shall engage the community of diverse persons and entities involved with the local health system about that system on an ongoing basis, including about the integrated health service plan and while setting priorities."

So again, there is an entire system set out in the legislation to provide for accountability, for clarity, for transparency. I would just like to end by quoting the Minister of Health, who the other day very eloquently spoke about our new legislation:

"When we give more power to communities, when we ask the debate to be an open one, that is transparent, where hard decisions are made in the full public eye, we will have created more of a system and we will have fundamentally done what is most important of all; that is, to take this cherished gift, this thing called medicare, this best expression of Canadian values, and make it better because we will have returned it where it came from"—

The Acting Speaker: Have your seat, PA. Thank you.

There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m., Monday, February 27, 2006.

The House adjourned at 1809.

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No. 44A

N° 44A

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 27 February 2006

Lundi 27 février 2006

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 27 February 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 27 février 2006

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GRAPE AND WINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): I'd like to take this time to call on the finance minister to include in his spring budget assistance for the Ontario grape and wine industry. I'll call to the minister's attention an article in the *Globe and Mail* on February 18, 2006, that cites "thin tourist traffic, oppressive regulations, high taxes and an all-powerful LCBO that favours big ... producers over boutique wineries."

Norm Beal, the chair of the Ontario wine council, said, "There are a number of properties on the market, and a real risk that some will go bankrupt."

I have five ideas for the finance minister. I know the Minister of Tourism, who was applauding a moment ago, is a big supporter of the industry, as well.

First, the member for Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant and I brought forward at the finance committee two motions, the first to incorporate and incentivize growth in the VQA category as part of the LCBO business plan, and secondly, for Ontario to participate in the national replant program as promoted by the Grape Growers of Ontario. Unfortunately, these measures were defeated in committee despite the support of the NDP, but I do hope the finance minister, nonetheless, will move forward with them.

The number three idea: Move forward with Bill 7. The Ontario VQA Wine Stores Act would open up a new channel for our boutique wineries across the province. It has passed second reading with the support of all parties. We'd love to see it come to fruition.

In addition, the minister should examine the punishing tax burden at the LCBO that will often take high-quality VQA wines out of the system. He should explore, as British Columbia has done, whether there are some dormant licences in the system that could be used to further the VQA wine store concept, and I hope—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

MIKE POST

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It's my pleasure to rise in the House today in recognition of the efforts of Mike Post and his team at Prime Time Fitness and

Boxing, who are helping Ontarians become much healthier, much fitter. Mike, the owner of Prime Time Fitness, is currently the undefeated WBE welterweight US champion and is looking forward to making Prime Time his home base as he breaks into the international rankings.

I was honoured to be his guest at the grand opening of his Oakville fitness centre last month. The event was attended not only by Bronte community members but also members of the business improvement area—chairs Murray Macdonald and Laura Killip—and also by some of the biggest names in Canadian boxing. On hand to celebrate the new facilities were world number one ranked super bantamweight fighter Steve Molitor, former Canadian champion Brian Mackie, six-time amateur national champion Jason Douglas, as well as young up-and-comers Ray Olubwale and Rey Morales.

Mike's goal is nothing short of ambitious. He wants to revolutionize the boxing training industry. He plans to use Prime Time to serve both the needs of professional clientele as well as the general public, and at the same time provide opportunities for our communities' youth to work and train.

I'm proud that, after having so much professional success in Canada and the United States, Mike has decided to come back home to Oakville to pursue his dreams. I extend my best wishes to Prime Time boxing for a long and prosperous future.

RURAL ONTARIO

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): I stand to congratulate the OLA—the Ontario Landowners Association—on a successful founding meeting this past weekend. The convention was the culmination of years of frustration and determination for rural landowners whose issues have been largely ignored and pushed aside, issues like property and land rights; municipal restructuring; source water protection; the war on tobacco; farm regulations on eggs, cheese, chickens, farmers' markets; and, of course, the farm income crisis.

The weekend conference featured Liberal MP Wayne Easter and Conservative MPs Scott Reid and Darryl Kramp. I was in attendance, as well as former MPP Garry Fox.

This meeting of the minds included a debriefing on the federal election as well as strategy for municipal and, yes, provincial elections. The OLA founding declaration will "advocate for the protection of property rights," and, "should the need arise ... create a political party." Ontario

landowners will also hold elections to represent rural Ontario in the Senate. The OLA constitution states, "To uphold our rural identity, traditions, security and prosperity ... in keeping with the principles of natural justice."

Tired of lip service to rural interests and interested in hearing more? Come out to Port Perry March 8 to hear John Tory and—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

1340

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): I rise today to inform the House of a recent event that I had the privilege and honour of attending in the riding of Brant. The event was the annual awards ceremony for the Royal Canadian Legion, Brantford Branch 90. Every year, the Legion gathers to honour the ongoing service of its members and to celebrate their achievements not only in their branch but in the community.

Branch 90 of the Royal Canadian Legion has a rich, rich history in Brantford. The Legion handed out 11 60-year gold service pins and two 50-year gold pins for local veterans' service to our community. The Royal Canadian Legion in Brantford has a very large and dedicated membership. Ordinary members have contributed a total of 1,565 years of service to the Legion and the community. Associate members in total have contributed 1,030 years of service to our community. This clearly demonstrates the strength of the veteran community in Brant, as well as their dedication and involvement within their own organization.

I understand that one of the three remaining First World War veterans, Dwight Wilson, celebrated his 105th birthday surrounded by family and friends. We all congratulate him.

In the spirit of celebrating the sacrifices and commitments made by our veterans, we see construction of the veterans' memorial on the south lawn, the first new monument to be built on the grounds of Queen's Park in 65 years. We are indeed indebted to the heroic service of our veterans, and I encourage all of the members to join me in showing our support and gratitude wherever and however we can from this place. Congratulations—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): The McGuinty government is making post-secondary education announcements without contributing any—or little—capital funding to support these announcements. Recently, a satellite medical school for Kitchener was announced with only \$3 million for capital construction from the province. According to Mayor Craig of Cambridge, regional taxpayers may be asked for \$20 million more.

This is becoming the norm in our community. When the creation of the University of Waterloo health sciences

campus in Kitchener was announced two years ago, the province refused to spend a dime on construction, and city taxpayers are paying \$30 million. When Wilfrid Laurier University announced it was relocating its faculty of social work to downtown Kitchener, the province contributed nothing for capital costs and Kitchener taxpayers were left with a \$6.5-million bill.

Something is wrong here. Our community has always been prepared to pay its fair share, but the responsibility for post-secondary education and health care lies with the provincial McGuinty government, not our regional taxpayers. I urge the McGuinty government to live up to its provincial responsibilities for post-secondary education and health care.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): On May 13, 2005, Mr. McGuinty said on post-secondary education, "By quality, we mean more faculty at colleges and universities, to accommodate higher enrolments and help students succeed, more faculty time for students, more students completing their undergraduate programs and going on to grad school and easier movement for students between colleges and universities."

Yet, in spite of this, as of March 7, some 9,100 teachers, counsellors and librarians at Ontario's 24 community colleges could be on strike. The number one issue for their members is updating the workload formula. They want smaller class sizes, more teachers and more faculty time for students. The workload plan should be improved in the areas of student evaluation and feedback, preparation time, giving teachers the right to determine the methods of evaluation and reducing class size, including looking for staffing improvements so partial-load faculty who are teaching seven to 12 hours are treated fairly.

Negotiations are to resume on March 2, to March 6. I am hoping and we are all hoping that management is going to negotiate a fair deal so that we can indeed reach the kind of goal and the expectations on quality that Mr. McGuinty is looking for.

FIRE IN BRIGHTON

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): I rise to inform my colleagues of a fire and numerous propane explosions which took place Saturday evening, February 25, at Gerow Propane Ltd., in the municipality of Brighton in my riding of Northumberland. I commend Christine Herrington, mayor of the municipality of Brighton, as well as emergency officials, who declared a state of emergency at 12:12 a.m. As a precaution, residents within a 1.5-kilometre radius were evacuated, affecting approximately 400 residents. I was personally on hand at the command centre, and was impressed by the efforts of the municipality's emergency community control group as they coordinated the labour of six local fire departments, the Ministry of the Environment, the Technical Standards and Safety Authority as well as the Ontario fire marshal's office.

We can only imagine the risk these emergency workers undertook, knowing that the blaze they were battling had the potential for further propane explosions at any moment. I'm sure that the members of this House will join me while I congratulate and pay tribute to the more than 45 firefighters, along with OPP officers, who displayed tremendous bravery while battling this horrific inferno.

I spoke to Bruce Davis, CAO of the municipality of Brighton, and he is proud of the quick reaction which demonstrates how well prepared they are. He also indicated that those residents should sleep well at night, knowing their municipality has a tremendous plan in place to truly protect their community. This weekend's event indicated that the community is well prepared for any emergency action. I want to personally thank all of the people who took part, because they put other's lives before theirs.

CORNWALL COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I am proud to recognize an outstanding fundraising effort in my riding of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh. Several local radio stations under the Corus banner joined together last Friday for the Corus Cares: Our Hospital, Our Future radiothon. The intent was to keep the momentum going on fundraising efforts for our community hospital project, for which \$10.9 million has already been raised. The radiothon did far more than that. Over a 13-hour period, the event raised \$151,197. That's right: Donations poured in from all corners of the riding, from young children to seniors, from businesses large and small. Everyone has pulled together again to show how giving, how committed to their community, the people of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh and the city of Cornwall are.

I would like to thank our community's radio, Corus Entertainment, for organizing the event, local residents Tom and Gail Kaneb for co-chairing the hospital fundraising campaign and working tirelessly to get the word out, and each and every person who manned a phone or put in a donation. A special thank you goes to Premier McGuinty and Minister Smitherman for lending their voices and support to the radiothon.

I am impressed by the generosity of my constituents, but not surprised. In the words of Toronto-area businessman Mitchell Abbey, who is planning to locate an operation in the city, "Cornwall has shown itself to be extremely resilient and entrepreneurial." The results of this radiothon are another proof that the city is the little city with the big heart.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I rise in the House today to clarify some misconceptions about our plan for local health integration networks, otherwise known as

LHINs. There is a lot of misinformation out there, and unfortunately there is also a lot of misinformation being circulated. There are some who are alleging that the LHINs are somehow paving the way to health care privatization.

This could hardly be further from the truth. With LHINs, patients will still only use their OHIP cards to obtain services. No individual will ever get to the front of the line because they can better afford it. The fact is, this legislation contains no provision for increased privatization or expansion of competitive bidding. Furthermore, it very specifically prohibits the integration that would result in an individual being required to pay for a health service. This government's commitment to public medicine could not be stronger, which is why we enshrined it in the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act.

I am proud of this legislation because it's about giving more power to Ontario's communities. Local experts are simply the best placed to understand the health care needs of their own communities.

1350

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I beg leave to present a report on pre-budget consultation 2006 from the standing committee on finance and economic affairs and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Hoy: I want to thank the members of the legislative committee as well as the members of the public who attended those hearings, and all the staff who worked so hard to produce this report.

I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

REGULATORY MODERNIZATION ACT, 2006 LOI DE 2006 SUR LA MODERNISATION DE LA RÉGLEMENTATION

Mr. Peters moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 69, An Act to allow for information sharing about regulated organizations to improve efficiency in the administration and enforcement of regulatory legislation and to make consequential amendments to other Acts /
Projet de loi 69, Loi permettant l'échange de renseignements sur les organismes réglementés afin de

rendre plus efficaces l'application et l'exécution de la législation de nature réglementaire et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The minister may wish to make a brief statement.

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): Speaker, I'll defer and deliver my statement during ministerial statements.

OPTOMETRY AMENDMENT ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES OPTOMÉTRISTES

Ms. Martel moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 70, An Act to amend the Optometry Act, 1991 /
Projet de loi 70, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur les optométristes.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): The purpose of the bill is to amend the Optometry Act to allow optometrists to prescribe therapeutic pharmaceutical agents, TPAs, for the treatment of certain eye diseases.

While optometrists are responsible for the majority of primary eye and vision care in Ontario, they are not permitted to prescribe treatments for patients who present with eye diseases. Instead, patients must get a prescription from a medical doctor to access the treatment they need. This may result in delays in treatment or additional demands being made on walk-in clinics and emergency departments for those who don't have a family doctor.

Seven other Canadian jurisdictions have passed legislation to allow optometrists to prescribe TPAs. The Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council, HPRAC, is reviewing the matter now. It's time for Ontario to ensure that patients can get the treatment they need for certain eye diseases when they visit their optometrists.

This is the third time the bill has been introduced, and I'd like to thank the member from Niagara South for the work that he has done in the past in this regard.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Monday, February 27, 2006, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1355 to 1400.

The Speaker: All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Dunlop, Garfield	Peterson, Tim
Balkissoon, Bas	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Phillips, Gerry
Bartolucci, Rick	Fonseca, Peter	Pupatello, Sandra
Bentley, Christopher	Gerretsen, John	Qaadri, Shafiq
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoy, Pat	Racco, Mario G.
Bradley, James J.	Jackson, Cameron	Ramal, Khalil
Brownell, Jim	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramsay, David
Bryant, Michael	Kular, Kuldeep	Rinaldi, Lou
Cansfield, Donna H.	Leal, Jeff	Ruprecht, Tony
Caplan, David	Levac, Dave	Sandals, Liz
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Matthews, Deborah	Smith, Monique
Chudleigh, Ted	Mauro, Bill	Sterling, Norman W.
Colle, Mike	McMeekin, Ted	Tory, John
Cordiano, Joseph	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Crozier, Bruce	Meilleur, Madeleine	Watson, Jim
Delaney, Bob	Miller, Norm	Wilkinson, John
Dhillon, Vic	Milloy, John	Wilson, Jim
Di Cocco, Caroline	Mitchell, Carol	Wong, Tony C.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Munro, Julia	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	Parsons, Ernie	Yakabuski, John
Duncan, Dwight	Peters, Steve	Zimmer, David

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Martel, Shelley
Horwath, Andrea	Marchese, Rosario	Prue, Michael

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 63; the nays are 6.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): I rise today to present the House with details about the Regulatory Modernization Act, 2006, which I had the honour of introducing a few minutes ago.

This act, if passed, would strengthen public protection by introducing innovative improvements to the way we inspect, investigate and enforce laws across this great province. The legislation would, if passed, improve protection of the public by enabling staff in our 13 enforcement ministries and related agencies to achieve new levels of co-operation, use information more effectively, and target efforts where they count. This would result in better enforcement of the laws that protect our workers, our environment, our fish, our wildlife, the public and our farmers. At the same time, it would allow

businesses to operate more effectively by reducing duplication in information collection and other compliance activities. Simply put, better connections equal better protection.

The people of Ontario expect the government to introduce laws that will protect them. This we do. We have examined our approaches and have found a number of ways in which we can improve. Currently, 13 different Ontario ministries and other government organizations enforce a wide variety of laws to keep the public safe. In fact, it is not uncommon in this province for businesses to be subject to inspections from as many as seven or eight different ministries. This causes duplication of government compliance efforts and places unnecessary burdens on businesses. I want to be perfectly clear: Individually, these ministries are doing an admirable job, yet the pressures on our field staff continue to grow, and we have to come up with new initiatives and new tools to get the job done.

I would like to thank my fellow ministers and officials from 13 participating ministries who have been involved in the efforts for us to all work together. I would also like to thank Minister Bentley, who, when Minister of Labour, initiated and planted the seeds for this project. Most importantly, this idea came from the government's ideas campaign, our government's campaign to encourage members of the Ontario public service to contribute ideas to get better results for the public's money. This is an idea that came from ministry staff.

I want to thank all of those who were involved in coming up with such a bright idea. While I cannot personally name all of them, I would like to thank John Stager, assistant deputy minister for the inspections, investigation and enforcement secretariat, or the II&E, and Jane Mallen of the Ministry of the Attorney General. Both are here today in the gallery along with many colleagues from the various ministries, from the II&E and legal communities, so welcome them here. Welcome, all, and thank you all very much.

I'd like to summarize a few key points of the legislation. By changing the way regulatory ministries can use and share information, this legislation could make it easier to administer and enforce about 85 statutes and 600 regulations across this province. If passed, it would:

- allow ministries to share specific types of business-related compliance information amongst themselves;
- introduce a “heads up” provision that would authorize staff to notify another ministry if they observe something that is likely to be under the mandate of the other ministry;
- authorize ministers to create teams of field staff to work together; and
- allow ministers to publish information about an organization's compliance record.

This information would also target repeat offenders by requiring the courts to consider relevant previous convictions in sentencing.

Sharing information would allow us to reduce the burden of duplication businesses face as a result of our

regulatory efforts. This would let business get back to doing what they do best—supporting Ontario's economy.

A big impact of the legislation would be the ability it gives to address the issue of non-compliance, targeting companies that choose to not play by the rules. These rule breakers not only break our laws, but they undercut responsible businesses and put the public at risk. By creating teams of field staff from different ministries, we could work together to target these repeat violators. This would remove the competitive advantage that these rule breakers seek to gain, and support responsible businesses that comply with our laws.

It is important to note that there are a number of safeguards that have been built into this legislation. While it would allow for field staff to share information, it would not undermine the protection of personal privacy. There are specific limits in the heads-up provision that do not allow for so-called fishing expeditions. Field staff would be limited to sharing “plain view” observations only. I've personally met with the Information and Privacy Commissioner regarding this legislation, and she is comfortable with our approach. Even with the additional powers of this legislation, these safeguards ensure balance.

These are the key parts of the legislation that I've introduced today. In developing this legislation, we've examined the best practices for regulatory compliance in more than 40 jurisdictions. I'm proud to say that this legislation, if passed, would make Ontario a true leader in regulatory compliance.

This legislation is but one piece of a larger modernization plan. We'll be introducing a performance-based strategy to recognize those companies with exceptional records of compliance. We could then target enforcement efforts towards those companies that commit serious repeat violations. We've also launched a pilot project designed to assist small business in improving their compliance by introducing easy-to-understand tool kits that will help. We have consulted with our stakeholders, small business, other business groups, ministry field staff and the unions that represent those employees. All are in agreement with our approach.

The time has come to move forward with a bold new way of protecting the public by modernizing the way we share information and work together across government. I urge all members of this House to support the legislation. It's good for business, it's good for government and it's good for the people of Ontario, because truly, better connections equal better protection.

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POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AND SKILLS TRAINING

ÉDUCATION POSTSECONDAIRE ET FORMATION PROFESSIONNELLE

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): We know that when we invest in post-secondary education and skills today, we build jobs and prosperity tomorrow. The brains and

know-how of a skilled workforce are the competitive edge of the 21st century.

But higher education is much more than that: It is the very foundation of an engaged citizenry and a strong democracy.

Le Canada a besoin de programmes d'éducation postsecondaire et de formation professionnelle qui comptent parmi les meilleurs au monde:

Achieving that goal will require us to build a new and successful partnership with the federal government. That's why I'm pleased to be able to report to the Legislature on an extraordinary event I was privileged to attend last week: the historic national summit on post-secondary education and skills training, held in Ottawa.

The summit was conceived in August 2005 at the Council of the Federation. At that time, Premiers asked Premiers McGuinty and Charest to convene a summit on post-secondary education and skills training and to lead a process to develop a Canada-wide strategy. The result was last Friday's Competing for Tomorrow summit, organized and hosted by Premiers McGuinty and Charest. Six other Premiers also participated in the discussions. I was honoured to work with the Premier to prepare for and attend this national summit.

The summit demonstrated a new way of doing business for Canada. For the first time, Premiers from all provinces and territories worked directly with stakeholders to create a Canada-wide strategy for post-secondary education and skills training. More than 200 leaders from across Canada came to share ideas on challenges, strategies and actions to prepare our post-secondary education and skills training systems for the 21st century. Premiers were able to hear from leaders from across the country, including students, university and college presidents, employers and representatives from apprenticeships, business, labour, aboriginal people, persons with disabilities and other community groups.

Delegates at the summit were asked to discuss key issues, challenges and priorities for action in seven theme areas. Here are some of the things we heard from the leaders participating in the summit:

On access, we heard about the importance of access and the need for a commitment from all partners to support post-secondary education and skills training opportunities for all Canadians, including aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities and students from low-income families.

On quality and funding, participants brought their ideas about innovative ways to maintain and increase the quality of Canada's post-secondary education and skills training systems. They agreed that new federal resources are required to support provinces and territories, and shared their ideas on the amount and types of supports that the federal government should contribute to this national priority.

On participation in the labour force, participants recognized that high levels of participation in the workforce benefit not only individuals but the overall prosperity of our society. They shared a concern about unfair

barriers encountered by many immigrants seeking adequate jobs to match their skills. They recognize many of our people lack the literacy skills to work and succeed in today's knowledge economy.

On skills for the 21st-century workplace, participants stressed the need for employer investment and training to build skills for the 21st-century workplace. They told us training is key to a successful strategy for strengthening workplace skills, especially as technology continues to evolve. They agreed that employers need encouragement to invest in the skills of their workers.

On research and innovation capacity, participants urged partners to work together to boost Canada's research and innovation capacity. They recognized that investing in research brings multiple rewards to post-secondary learning, to economic competitiveness and to society as a whole.

What of lifelong learning? Many recognized that students and citizens need help to make transitions from one stage of learning to the next and to skills upgrading opportunities. There was agreement that Canadians need to adopt a culture of learning that involves continuous training for all students and workers, whatever their age and wherever they live.

On the needs of rural and northern areas, there was strong representation that people in northern and rural areas face many barriers to participating in post-secondary education and skills training, and that governments must introduce solutions with a greater awareness of the challenges faced by those in both rural and northern areas.

In conclusion, it's clear that Canada needs leadership on this issue. Premier McGuinty provided the energy, passion and dedication that made the summit possible and that gives us all cause for optimism. We share responsibility now to move forward.

Ontario has recognized the need for action. Through the Reaching Higher plan, we are investing \$6.2 billion over the next five years, the largest investment in post-secondary education and training in Ontario in over 40 years. Reaching Higher focuses on quality, access and accountability, and these themes form the basis for much of the discussion at the summit. As Premier McGuinty told the summit, the most important thing we need to do is to ensure that all Canadians understand the importance and urgency of developing the skills and knowledge of our young people.

We need to achieve excellence in research and innovation, quality of teaching, student experience and workplace outcomes. We need to provide everyone with the opportunity to achieve their full potential. Our greatest asset in this country is our people, and we have a duty to invest to ensure that our post-secondary education and skills programs are second to none.

We need to develop a culture of education, skills and innovation as well as a love of learning, but we can't do this alone. As the summit participants told us, we need a partnership to provide the required level of investments, and the Premiers and participants called upon the federal government to join with the provinces and territories in

committing to a Canada-wide strategy for post-secondary education and skills training.

Premiers McGuinty and Charest will continue to take a leading role through the Council of the Federation in making post-secondary education and skills training a top priority for all Canadians.

GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I'll just spend two and a half minutes responding to the statement and the legislation that was introduced by the Minister of Labour to give sweeping powers to government inspectors. I'll say at the beginning that it's sad that you need to change the laws—or you feel you need to change the laws—because inspectors aren't able to pass on information today. I'm not sure that's totally true and I'm not sure you want to give this much power to the first inspector who walks on the premises. I've had bad experiences with government inspectors in the past—overzealous liquor inspectors, various overzealous labour ministry inspectors.

In response to a question from the media about, “Will this cut red tape?” you didn't do a very good job answering that. In fact, you said no. “Will this create any more jobs in the province?” You said no, it won't create any jobs. “Will this save any money?” You said no, it's not the intent to save any money.

In fact, I think this will discourage—I just looked at your website and you encourage self-reporting. Why would anyone self-report when one inspector shows up and now he can call 12 of his buddies in other ministries? You're going to have an inspector love-in on your hands if you don't bring safeguards into this.

You say this is good for business. I don't see anyone—we ran small businesses in my family and we had a heck of a time all the time with the health inspector because we owned a tavern that had a dirt basement. The fact of the matter is, if he had had those powers in those days, he would have shut us down every day of the week. Yet there was nothing wrong with the ice on our premises, I can tell you that.

You should have got up today—because you didn't talk about jobs in the whole press conference—and told us what you're going to do to reverse the trend we've seen: 56,000 manufacturing jobs lost in 2005; 33,000 manufacturing jobs lost in January of this year alone.

So I say to you, good luck. I don't believe that you need this legislation the way you think you need it. You've not made a good case for it and I don't believe it's as business-friendly as you say it is.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AND SKILLS TRAINING

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I want to thank the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities for his comments in the House today. I also want to thank him for reporting to this House, which is not always the

case with some ministers. So I wanted to say for the record that that is appreciated, so that we can comment on it.

Obviously the minister is painfully aware of the severe cuts for post-secondary education by the federal government that we've been experiencing over the last 10 years. It was the catalyst for much of the discussion. It's clearly been commented on by many.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order.

Mr. Jackson: I suspect the Minister of the Environment wants to hear more. They pale by comparison to the cuts that Ontarians experienced in health care as Paul Martin attempted to balance the books on the back of Ontario health care and post-secondary education.

But Stephen Harper did indicate when he campaigned in the last election that he would make post-secondary—

Interjections.

Mr. Jackson: The government opposite really doesn't want to hear when there is co-operation between the Conservative federal government and the Ontario Liberal government. Somehow you think this is bad news. I think you really should learn how to get onside and work with a government that says it's going to do something here.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. I need to be able to hear the member for Burlington.

Member for Burlington.

Mr. Jackson: When I check the websites for what the Liberals promised in the last election, it's no wonder Paul Martin didn't succeed in his last electoral endeavour, because his website was rather sparse when it came to commitments in post-secondary. Mind you, he was the minister who cut \$2.2 billion from transfers to the provinces.

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This is a new government in Ottawa that has promised to work with the provinces to increase family income thresholds for student loan eligibility—that will mean more students across Canada will get access to affordable education; exempt the first \$10,000 of student scholarship or bursary income from taxation; provide students or their parents with a federal tax credit on spending up to \$500 per year on their textbooks; and in co-operation with the provinces, remove post-secondary education funding from the Canada social transfer, and create an independent Canada education and training transfer to ensure that there is dedicated funding for post-secondary education and training. Clearly, this was a commitment made by the federal government. We're delighted that the two Premiers have seen fit to come to Ottawa and through this summit determine the future for post-secondary in our country.

GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): New Democrats don't quarrel in principle with the proposition that there should not be arbitrary prohibitions against an

inspector for a given ministry reporting back observations that may be within the bailiwick or jurisdiction of yet another ministry. At the same time, we will be carefully watching this bill as it proceeds through second reading. It strikes us as a bill that inevitably and necessarily has to be subject to public hearings.

Let me tell you some of the fears that we have. These are not foreign to the minister; he anticipates these concerns, I'm sure.

One is the creation of a generic inspector, and the abandonment of the incredible skill sets that hard-working inspectors in any number of ministries develop over the course of years of dedication to the public sector here in Ontario. So we have concerns about the prospect of generic inspectors. We think it's imperative that inspectors from the Ministry of the Environment remain within the MOE and that inspectors from the MTO remain within the MTO etc.

Secondly, we're concerned about the prospect of inflated data or inflated statistics. In other words, we understand that an inspection by a Ministry of Labour inspector will be recorded as an inspection by the Ministry of Labour. But should that inspector observe infractions he or she believes of environmental laws or Ministry of Transportation laws, we don't believe that should be counted as yet another inspection. We want to make sure that the legislation makes it clear that these inspections cannot be multiplied by virtue of the multiple observations that could be made.

Finally, and without limiting our concerns, we're concerned about the proposition of there being checklists, in other words, of inspectors going in being called upon to do omnibus inspections. We find that an inappropriate exercise on the part of this ministry.

At the end of the day, it's really all about good public servants: inspectors trying to do their jobs with incredibly limited resources and tools. We put to you that during the course of the development of this legislation, we'll be calling upon this government to ensure that our ministries are adequately staffed with inspectors so that they're out there not only doing the inspections but laying the charges, proceeding with the prosecutions and getting the convictions of any number of bad bosses and bad operators across the province.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AND SKILLS TRAINING

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I'm happy to respond to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, and I am very pleased to say that all the provinces and the federal government are now debating the importance of colleges and universities. In light of the fact that 80% of the new jobs that are being created in the next decade will require some post-secondary education or training, this is indeed a very timely debate.

Mr. Bentley speaks about quality, and adds that a tuition fee hike he will announce soon will increase the quality of education offered at community colleges and

universities. What we saw under the Conservative regime was that for every dollar in tuition hikes, the government took \$2 out of the system.

I remind the minister and monsieur McGuinty that they can't use the federal government as an excuse for hiking tuition fees at colleges and universities.

The Premier wants our universities to compete with the world's best, but how can our best compete if they can't afford university? Raising tuition fees will drive students out of school, cheat them of opportunities and weaken our province. Federal cuts have driven the cost of tuition fees up, but other provinces have maintained a freeze on tuition rates. Monsieur McGuinty and the minister should do the same. The Premier says failure is not an option; well, it's the Premier who will be failing our students, if tuition fees rise. Manitoba, Newfoundland and Saskatchewan have all maintained a freeze; Ontario should follow their lead.

Currently, medical school tuition fees at the University of Toronto are over \$16,000 a year, while Quebec medical students pay around \$3,000 per year to attend McGill University. Both institutions are considered to be top-notch institutions, yet Toronto students pay about five times the tuition fees of McGill students. Don't you go telling me, Minister and Monsieur McGuinty, that these costs to go to medical school—\$16,000; to go to U of T legal school here costs \$16,000—do not affect access. They do. Students are discouraged from entering these programs, and the government must reflect on the implications of that. Students in general programs are paying 5,000 bucks each, and the deregulated programs have been astronomical, as I pointed out. Students graduate with debts that look like second mortgages—in some cases, first mortgages.

What I say to the government and what I'm saying to students and the people of Ontario is this: Support my Bill 12, which calls for a freeze on tuition hikes until 2007, and then let each party go into an election with their plans. But until then, freeze tuition fees. That's what we call on Monsieur McGuinty to do.

VISITORS

Mr. Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: In the gallery opposite, we have a group of men and women, agriculturalists and rural residents from Lambton, Middlesex, Chatham-Kent and Essex. They're here taking part in Government 101, hosted by my colleague the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. Welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Energy. Can the minister tell us how many megawatts of new generation capacity

are under construction in the province at the present time?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): We have just under 9,000 megawatts that will be put into place in the next five years. Melancthon, which is close to where you are, will be up and going in March, one of the first wind turbine farms in Ontario.

Mr. Tory: Perhaps the minister misunderstood my question. The question was, how many new projects are under construction today? I don't think you really meant that there would be 9,000 megawatts of new projects under construction today, because the fact is, on most of these major projects that you've made such a big deal about, there isn't a shovel in the ground: Greenfield power, 280 megawatts, cancelled; Calpine, bankrupt, 1,000 megawatts cancelled or delayed; Invenergy in Lambton, 570 megawatts, can't get zoning; Thunder Bay, 310 megawatts, needs an environmental assessment to bring the gas pipeline to town; Greenfield South, facing delays by the host municipality, 280 megawatts. That's almost 2,500 right there where there is not a shovel in the ground. Nothing is happening.

Your plan for energy replacement is in a shambles. When are you going to do something about it, go back to the drawing board, come up with a real plan and stop putting families and jobs in this province at risk?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. In fact, Calpine is under construction. In fact, Sithe Goreway is under construction, and the first phase will be up in 2007. I would be very happy to sit down with the member opposite and provide an update on where each of the levels are.

Remember that a lot of our proposals are dealing with the wind. We have, for the first time, two wind manufacturers who have come into this province. So 2,800 came in. In the next five years, we have 9,000 under way. We do, in fact, have shovels in the ground. Calpine Mitsui is one of them.

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Mr. Tory: The fact is that the 2007—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): John, you need to get back to your riding.

The Speaker: The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): She defies you all the time. No respect for the Speaker, Ms. Pupatello.

The Speaker: The member for Niagara Centre.

The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: In fact, the 2007 coal promise was predicated on many of the projects I've just listed being complete by now. Dalton McGuinty wrote to the Hamilton Spectator and said that there would be 5,500 megawatts of new natural gas projects on line and complete by 2006, which is where we now are. Of course, they're not on line; they're not complete. He also said that the Toronto waterfront project would be complete by 2004. That was

two years ago, and we know where that is today. None of these are really even under way at all.

Will you admit that your plan isn't a plan, that we need to go back to the drawing board in terms of the dates and the times with respect to the coal promise? Will you admit that you need to examine clean technologies and that you need to come up with some realistic dates that are not irresponsible, that are not going to put jobs and families at risk in this province? Will you admit that?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I thank you for the question. What I will admit is that nothing was done in this province for 10 years. In fact, not only was the generation neglected, the transmission was neglected. Not only was the transmission neglected, the conservation was neglected.

We said we would build, and we have. We said we would maximize our existing transmission, and we have. We said we would maximize our existing generation, and we have. We said we would build a conservation culture, and we are. So those projects are under way.

You're right: It takes some time to go through the processes. I'm sure you're not like the member of the other party in that you want those EAs done in a heartbeat. There is a process to work with the communities and we are undergoing those processes. But I have to tell you that for the first time there's more than 1,345 megawatts of renewable energy in this province that hadn't been there before.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Tory: My new question is to the Minister of Energy as well. Will you confirm that you asked Toronto Hydro to provide a bid for the waterfront hydro project with a deadline of February 15, only then to turn around and award the project to the other bidder on February 10, without ever seeing the bid that you asked for from Toronto Hydro? Will you confirm that you did that?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: Thank you for the question. Actually, I did not. I had nothing to do with it. I did meet with the proponents of both earlier in the year and at such time looked at what was available. I'll say this again: One of the proponents wanted us to give them our asset and I said, "No, that asset belongs to the people of Ontario." Another wanted us to waive the EA and I said, "Absolutely not. There is a process for the EA." There was a question of having emergency generation, which they then would tear down. I have things that I believe ratepayers would rather do with \$120 million than put up temporary generation.

So in fact the proponent was not ready and needed all of our work in order for them to move forward. As a matter of fact, it was that same proponent who in a letter to me on January 11 indicated that we needed 550 megawatts of supply in the city by 2010.

Mr. Tory: In fact it was a deadline of February 15, set by the minister, where you invited these people to come in with a bid. Whatever discussions or meetings you had with them in between is really not the point. The point is that you put a process in motion to have more than one bidder. The deadline for those bidders to put in their bids

was February 15, and you then turned around and awarded the contract without even seeing the second bid.

You realize that this has got you involved up to your elbows in a bidding process and really calls into question that entire process. Your predecessor said, and made a big deal of saying, in November 2004, "This government set up an independent process, with outside consultants, overseen by a fairness commissioner. The bids were not known to the government. The government had no involvement in the selection of the successful bidders."

In this case, there's no transparency and your hands are all over it. You actually opened the first bid and awarded it before you even had the second one.

Will you re-tender this and follow proper process, as your predecessor indicated he was doing and as you should?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: Thank you for the question. The simple answer is that the leader of the official opposition is mistaken. He is wrong. I had nothing at all to do with the February 15 date. In fact, I did meet with both proponents.

The Independent Electricity System Operator wrote a letter and declared that we were in a very serious crisis for the year 2008 for downtown Toronto. We looked at what was available in order to meet that deadline so there would not be rolling blackouts. We did it with the understanding that the asset belongs to the people of Toronto and Ontario, not to Florida Power & Light, and that under no circumstances would we transfer, at no cost, that piece of property to a private company. I don't know how many times I have said this, but the leader is mistaken in his date.

Mr. Tory: The one thing we're clearly not mistaken about is that you were involved, because you said you were meeting with the proponents. I find it very interesting and would ask you to explain why, if we got this letter—and we'll look into and will access information about the circumstances leading to the IESO letter you mysteriously got at just the right time to declare a crisis in Toronto that others had been talking about for months. But the letter arrived declaring a crisis. Are you telling this House that to let five more days pass by to receive the bid that you asked for from these other people so you would have a basis for comparing these bids would have made a difference? And if the process is supposed to be, as your predecessor said, without involvement of the ministry and with fairness commissioners involved, why were you sitting down meeting with proponents, opening envelopes and generally messing around in this before the deadline that you set? Why were you doing that?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I did not open any envelopes, and I'd be very happy to give you the letter. The letter, dated January 11 this year, is by the independent system operator, Hydro One, the Ontario Power Authority and Toronto Hydro, and told us that a minimum level of generating capacity required by 2008 is 250 megawatts, and by 2010, 550 megawatts. So we worked with that letter in dealing with a crisis for this city, because we are going to keep the lights on. Remember: The property

belongs to the people of Ontario, not to Florida Power & Light at no cost.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is to the Acting Premier, and it concerns the McGuinty government's health disintegration networks. Section 28 of your LHINs legislation gives your health minister the unprecedented power to order the shutdown of local health services. Even worse, your health minister can order the shutdown of a local health service even if the McGuinty government is only a minority funding partner of the service. It means that even if the province funds a local health service, say, to the tune of 5% of its overall budget, your health minister can order that local health agency to shut down completely.

My question is simply, why does the McGuinty government want to give the health minister the unfettered power to go around and shut down local health care agencies?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): To the Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I find it intriguing that the honourable member, who wreaked havoc on this province as part of a government for five years, succumbs to the temptation to use the word "disintegration," because there is a party in this House represented by a smaller number of members that had associated with their record a reduction in the funding for hospitals, a reduction in the funding for OHIP, a reduction in the funding for the Ontario drug benefit.

The suggestion that there is some unfettered challenge here is a ridiculous assertion. The powers that the honourable member speaks about are powers that a minister could only use upon the recommendation of local health integration networks, which stand as the voice of community. At long last, we're giving the health care system back to the people of the province of Ontario.

1440

Mr. Hampton: Here is the chain of events: The McGuinty government hand picks and politically appoints people who are not local representatives. Those hand-picked political appointments then say to the Minister of Health—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Stop the clock. I need to be able to hear the leader of the third party. The rules are the same this week as they were last; I need to be able to hear the questions as they're put, and the responses.

The leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: The government doesn't want to hear these questions; they certainly don't want to answer them.

Let's take a real world example here. Let's look at the Alzheimer Society of Toronto. Only 8% of the Toronto

Alzheimer Society's funding comes from the provincial government. So 8% of \$1.3 million a year comes from the provincial government, yet you want to give yourself the unilateral, unfettered authority to shut down a local health service like that. My question again is, why does the McGuinty government want to give that kind of unfettered, unilateral authority to go around shutting down local health services that you only fund in a minority way?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: There he goes again: "unilateral" and "unfettered." The reality is that a simple review of the bill would indicate to the honourable member that there is, associated with the execution of any of those powers, a tremendous new mechanism: It is the mechanism of community recommendation.

The honourable member may choose to take a look at the quality of people who were appointed to those boards and disparage them with a sweep of his hand, notwithstanding the fact that some of them are prominent members of the party that he is the leader of. We haven't been concerned about that because they all have associated with them the number one ingredient that we seek, and that is a connection to community. That is at the heart of these mechanisms, not unilateral, not unfettered, but in partnership, and it is one that recognizes that if the community makes a recommendation about a change, a minister ought to be in a position to be able to respond to it.

Mr. Hampton: To say again: The people who you're appointing to the LHINs boards are not community representatives; they are not elected by the community; they're not put in place by the community. They are political appointments of your government. I think now we know why First Nations are so concerned: Most First Nation health services are primarily funded by the federal government, yet you want the authority to shut them down.

I want to quote from the Alzheimer Society: "Section 28 gives the minister powers beyond what are required and which strike at the core of our civil society.... This is unnecessary, unreasonable, counter-productive and, we believe, undemocratic." I repeat, Minister, answer the question. Why do you want to have the unilateral, unfettered authority to go around the province shutting down local health agencies that may get their funding from municipalities, from the federal government or from charities, and not from the McGuinty government?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Last week they were here and they said that the sky was going to fall if we gave pensioners the opportunity to have control over their own pension funds. Now it's the assertion of the New Democratic Party that if we make the mistake of taking a significant degree of power that I have the privilege of exercising today and to pass that on to people chosen from the local community who most certainly—if we take a look at their resumé, if we take a look at the people who have agreed to come and join these, who have gone to the committee, we see people who have one thing in common with one another, and it is a commitment to community.

Most of these people have been exercising their views on behalf of community in other health service provider organizations. We seek to tap them for that expertise based on the fundamental belief that the community deserves and should enjoy the opportunity to make important decisions about the future of the health care system which is, after all, theirs.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Hampton: Again to the Acting Premier, here's the pattern that's beginning to evolve: You have organizations like the Alzheimer Society of Toronto, a good, community-based organization, who have come forward and said, "Look, there's a real problem here with the legislation." The McGuinty government says, "We're going to ignore you." The Registered Nurses Association of Ontario warns your bill will mean privatization of key health services. They call that dangerous for patients. The McGuinty government says, "Ignore them." The Ontario Nurses' Association says your LHINs boards are "simply an additional layer of bureaucracy under the substantive control of the health minister." The McGuinty government says, "Ignore them."

Acting Premier, do you think all these dedicated health care organizations, all these dedicated health care providers, don't know what they're talking about?

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Only you, Howie.

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The government House leader took my line.

I want to say to the honourable member that the reality is that we worked very hard to engage the process at committee to work towards the opportunity to enhance the bill. We sought advice from a wide variety of parties. The honourable member characterizes the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario. I had a conversation very recently with the executive director. Of course, there are points where there are differences, but at the same time, they've been very clear and understanding that we have sought to make accommodations where those were appropriate and consistent with the values at the heart of the bill. And the values at the heart of the bill are what offends this member, because this member sees in those values a transfer of power from government beyond the norms of the traditional stakeholder relationship, wherein we engage people from the local community and give them the opportunity, for once, to be able to influence the evolution of their health care system.

This must proceed. Any of the kind of use of powers that the honourable member speaks about—the pattern is clear: We believe in public health care—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: Yes, the pattern is clear. We have First Nations who, after trying to engage your government, have concluded that you're quite prepared to trample on their treaty rights, their constitutional rights, and that you seek the power to shut down their health

care organizations, even when the majority of funding comes from the federal government. Or we have, for example, organizations like the Canadian Mental Health Association, who fundamentally disagree with what you're doing, or the Niagara region's francophone community, who have raised their issues only to be told by you and your government that they don't know what they're talking about.

I say again to the McGuinty government, don't you think it's time to pause and reflect when you have community health care organization after community health care organization after First Nations health care organization saying this is fundamentally a flawed bill? Don't you think it's time to fix it?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: At the end of the day, it's the obligation of government to reconcile a variety of different points of view. Ours is clear: At the heart of this bill are our values as a government. We believe fundamentally that it's about time that we brought more Ontarians into the opportunity to influence their health care.

The honourable member doesn't like to talk about several of those items you might think he'd be proud of—as an example, the kind of transparency that we're bringing forward in this bill. The member likes to jump to the conclusion of dire consequence, but he does a disservice to community because he wipes away the reality of community involvement, he wipes away the reality of engagement at the community level in the form of open public meetings and he wipes away the reality that under this bill and those provisions that he speaks to, no Minister of Health can move forward without the voice of community, after a transparent debate, coming forward and recommending that services be merged. Accordingly, this is a bill that seeks to transfer power to the community, and appropriately so.

Mr. Hampton: Again, you have organizations like the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario who are saying this is not a transfer to community, that this is centralization and consolidation in the Minister of Health's office.

The minister wants to talk about community. Here we have the Ontario Health Coalition, a community-based organization that points out exactly how centralizing this is. The Ontario Public Service Employees Union, CUPE, SEIU and, just to give an example, communities across northern Ontario see consolidation and centralization of health services in LHINs boards that are larger than most European countries. And the McGuinty government says this is local control.

Minister, all of these organizations have pointed out the fundamental problems with your bill. Are you going to ram it through and ignore them or are you going to pause and try to fix it?

1450

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I'm very pleased to address the concerns that the honourable member is raising, and two in particular, because he's got this scattergun approach. But I think two in particular warrant the consideration of this House more particularly.

The member has spoken about the needs of our aboriginal and francophone communities. Accordingly, that's why I'm proud that at the committee we were able to take advantage of advice from those communities and from honourable members to create, not just in the preamble but in the legislation itself, a requirement that the Ministry of Health create a capacity never before imagined in our province, where the government of the province of Ontario works with First Nations communities on a government-to-government basis to set the strategic parameters for the delivery of health care, with an obligation built into the legislation for community engagement and resourcing for First Nations communities to enhance their capacity to be involved in the important work of integrated health service plan preparation. Accordingly, our principles are sound, this bill is sound—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke):

My question is for the Minister of Energy. I noticed that when you announced the awarding of the generation contract to Portlands Energy Centre, you stated with great fanfare that this was the project that would be done sooner so that the lights won't go out in the city of Toronto. You were so certain that this was the one that you didn't even look at other bids. You assured us that this plant has all the necessary approvals needed.

Can you guarantee for us today, Minister, that this plant has all the necessary approvals such as an EA for the gas pipeline and zoning and building permits, or is this an example of “approve the project and answer the questions later”?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): What I can do—as I will tell you, this is written by the independent system operator, Hydro One, Toronto Hydro and the Ontario Power Authority, and it's dated January 11, 2006:

“We are writing to you to enumerate the immediate initiatives required to ensure the reliability of electricity supply to central Toronto for the summer of 2008 and beyond....

“We emphasize the requirements we set forth below are based on the physical realities of Toronto's electricity infrastructure as well as the application of internationally applied reliability standards.”

It goes on to say that they need a minimum of 250 megawatts of firm capacity, over and above what we put in place for conservation, by 2008. The connection point must be the Hearn switching station in order to allow for load transfers between the eastern and western parts. It's a tight construction schedule and delays will make it difficult.

It goes on to say that the ultimate level of generation capacity—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

Mr. Yakubuski: Minister, we're all very well aware of the generation issues within the city of Toronto. The problem is your response to it. Your government has consistently stated that you care deeply about energy conservation in Ontario, yet when you are provided with a proposal that would provide a \$30-million trust fund for conservation and education programs, you simply ignore it. In fact, not only did you ignore it, but you didn't even look at the full details of the proposal put forth by Toronto Hydro and Constellation Energy because you didn't even have it when you made your decision.

Minister, in typical Liberal fashion, your actions don't meet with your commitments. Will you guarantee for us today that you will reopen the selection process for generation in Toronto so that Toronto Hydro, a key partner in your supposed conservation plans, will get a fair hearing of their proposals? Will you guarantee us that today, Minister?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: Let me just conclude with one last point: "We recommend that you act on this matter expeditiously by issuing a directive" to the Ontario Power Authority, which in fact is what we did, but let me go through this again.

When the proponent came forward, they required an EA that would be waived. They would require \$120 million worth of temporary generation that would be torn down if, in fact, they could put it where they chose to. They had to buy out a contractor with a 30-year lease on a building that said it couldn't have generation in it. In addition to that, we would have to accelerate all of the permits, because they had nothing in place. In fact, the other proponent was much further along in the process, and working on the requirement from Toronto Hydro, the IESO, the Ontario Power Authority themselves, who demand that we work expeditiously—we did exactly that in order to keep the lights on.

The Speaker: Thank you. Point of order?

Mr. Yakubuski: Those answers were no answers at all. She never even dealt with—

The Speaker: Sit down. New question.

Mr. Yakubuski: I'm going to file the proper paperwork for a late show.

The Speaker: You would know, if you looked at the standing orders, it's just a matter of filing that with the table.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Tenants in Ontario are afraid that your new smart meter scheme will give landlords the power to gouge them for electricity costs. You want landlords to be able to download electricity costs to their tenants without the guarantee of a corresponding rent reduction. You promised new tenant legislation for this spring; you are imposing smart meters on tenants today. Will you impose a corresponding rent reduction on landlords at the same time?

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I can well understand the concern about this particular issue, but I can also tell the people of Ontario that we will be bringing in new tenant protection legislation that will include some of the various aspects he has mentioned. We want to be totally fair to both good landlords and good tenants. The system has not worked all that well over the last 20 or 30 years. There have been all sorts of different rules and regulations imposed on both landlords and tenants, and we want to get it right. We're taking our time to get it absolutely right because we think it's absolutely essential to both landlords and tenants. This particular issue will be dealt with at that time, as it is being dealt with currently by the Minister of Energy as well.

Mr. Prue: There's absolutely nothing in the bill currently before the House that provides that guarantee. Tenants have zero control over the energy efficiency of their building. They have no control over the insulation. They have no control over the energy efficiency of their large appliances. Yet you want landlords to be able to download the electricity costs to tenants without the guarantee of a corresponding rent reduction, and without mandating increases in overall building efficiency. Will you guarantee to tenants that smart metering will not be allowed unless there is a rent reduction for tenants negotiated by tenants and energy efficiency retrofits for apartment buildings?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: I'd like to refer the question with respect to smart metering to the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): Thank you for the question. In fact, the legislation does not affect the Tenant Protection Act. There has been a directive to the conservation bureau, through the Ontario Power Authority, to put in place a low-income strategy to deal with the issues that have been addressed. In addition to that, we actually have put in place a program for 5,000 units as a pilot in 20 communities right across this province to look at how we can deal with such things as retrofitting the appliances, because we know that those least able to afford the cost of electricity may in fact be those who need additional support systems such as ensuring that those appliances are changed.

One of the things I can tell you is that in one of our projects where we have had smart metering, there has been a significant saving that has gone back to the tenant. What is even more important is that we found 12 grow-ops, a reptile farm and a catering business that everybody was paying for. This way, people will not have to pay for something that is not part of their particular livelihood.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

M. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé. Monsieur le Ministre, cette fin de semaine il y avait des articles dans le journal Welland Tribune qui ont parlé de la loi sur l'intégration

du système de santé, et de tous les soucis des fournisseurs de services de santé francophones. Comme vous le savez, il y a une grande population de francophones dans ma circonscription d'Ottawa-Orléans. Alors, ce sujet m'intéresse beaucoup.

The concerns were from a francophone long-term-care home and community health centre that was seeking assurances that they will continue to have the ability to provide French-language services to francophones in their community. Minister, can you speak of how the LHIN legislation deals with the provision of French-language health care services?

1500

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I want to thank the honourable member for his question and for his keen interest in this issue. I think we all know that our francophone community experiences more profound challenges and difficulties with their health and with access to health care. That's why we took the opportunity, through the committee process, to enhance in the legislation those commitments that will ensure engagement with our francophone communities.

I just want to read this from the preamble:

"The people of Ontario and their government ... believe that the health system should be guided by a commitment to equity and respect for diversity in communities in serving the people of Ontario and respect the requirements of the French Language Services Act in serving Ontario's French-speaking community."

We went further. Right in the body of the legislation, we established the provincial advisory council to advise the minister about health and service delivery issues related to francophone communities. We'll be engaged with the actual francophone leadership in that. Accordingly, there will be a provision that will explicitly require local health integration networks to engage francophone communities in the development of integrated health services plans.

We're making sure that the francophone community has access to power and access to the opportunity to influence it from the standpoint of improving health care outcomes for—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. McNeely: Thank you for providing clarification on this matter. It is clear that this bill enshrines in legislation the government's respect for the delivery of health care services to those Ontarians who need services in the French language. In fact, I know our government has already demonstrated this commitment before these new amendments to the Local Health System Integration Act.

Minister, can you speak more broadly to how our government approaches health care delivery as it pertains to the francophone population, which may face barriers to care?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I had the chance to say before that we know that francophones have experienced

significant barriers to care. One study of many done in 2001 by the federation of francophone and Acadian communities of Canada found that access to health care services in French for Franco-Ontarians is severely lacking in hospital services, community health centres, medical clinics and home care, and that 74% of Franco-Ontarians said they have either no access at all or rarely have access to hospital services in French.

That's why I think it's important, if we look at the issues with respect to the Centre de santé communautaire de l'Estrie, that we are defending its mandate to provide French health services to the francophone population in Cornwall expressly because we've come to understand that certain communities in our population are significantly less healthy or experiencing challenges in access to care, which warrants the application of particular resources to be able to address the population health circumstances that are occurring.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Health. Last week, while the Minister of Health and the member for Peterborough were having one of those love-ins on a government-inspired question, there were people waiting in the hallways at the Peterborough Regional Health Centre to get proper accommodations. I visited the hospital on Friday, and the staff described that day as a better-than-average day. On a better-than-average day, there were six people lying on stretchers in the emergency room, waiting for a bed.

The administration and the hospital medical people say that the only way this problem is going to be fixed is if you provide the funding for more acute care medical beds, funding they have been asking for for three years. Minister, when are you going to approve the money for those beds to alleviate the crisis situation in that emergency room in Peterborough? When are you going to do it?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): It's interesting that the honourable member made it all the way to Peterborough on Friday but didn't have the capacity to bring back a little bit more information about the changes in the Peterborough circumstance over the last three years; for example, a great big new hospital coming to life, which your party couldn't manage to get done, or the reality that, in this very same community, tremendous leadership supported by our government is bringing a new family health team to life with new nurse practitioners who are already giving access to health care to people in that community who didn't have access to doctors and to health care. The honourable member didn't mention either our more recent investment of three new ICU critical care beds or 18 interim long-term-care beds.

The point is that we're working carefully with the people in Peterborough to enhance their capacity to meet the needs and to make up for a lot of lost time that is your legacy.

Mr. Tory: The fact is that the people of the Peterborough hospital say that what has been done is nowhere near enough, and the fact is that there are patients today looking out the window at that construction site you talk about, lying on gurneys where they've been, sometimes, for days waiting for a bed in that hospital.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Stop the clock. Minister of Community and Social Services, come to order. Order, Minister of Finance.

Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: On my way back from Peterborough, I decided to see if I could go in and get some money from the Central East LHIN office, one of those great world focal points of local input. I got there at 10 to 5 on a Friday afternoon. The office was shut tight. There wasn't a person in sight. The lights were off. All you could see through the door was the new furniture that's in there, paid for with taxpayers' money. The fact is, the money you blew, the money the minister blew on that new furniture for those offices, could have helped people like Marilyn Burrows. You see, she doesn't quite share your view about all this and all that you've done. She spent two and a half days in the hallway near the X-ray room across from the staff lounge, waiting in the emergency room. She said, writing to the Peterborough Examiner, "On any given day there is a lineup of patients with small children who are ill and nowhere to go.... Shame on Health Minister George Smitherman and the Ontario government."

I can attest to that because that's what I saw. You came up with \$2 million for furniture in the LHIN offices that are closed and shut tight and dark on a Friday afternoon. When are you going to come up with money for the Peterborough hospital, for the medical beds they need that are going to solve the problem?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: When, indeed, is that honourable member either going to stand in his place or lean over to the person to his right and ask the fundamental question, "Why is it that when we were in government we closed thousands of hospital beds and 28 hospitals in the province of Ontario?" That is your legacy, sir. That is your legacy. And while you're at it, stand before us and tell us how it is that you're going to reconcile your desire today to increase hospital funding across the board beyond the \$25 million we've provided to Peterborough, consistent with your promised \$2.4-billion cut to health care. Reconcile that, Mr. Tory.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The government House leader, order. We have members waiting to ask questions.

New question.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. You haven't made the provincial investments that you promised to expand Ontario's child care program. Now the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association and

worried municipalities have asked that you put your government's child care funding promise in writing. Minister, will you commit to providing this written guarantee so that cities like Hamilton can proceed with their plans to create more affordable child care spaces without worrying about the collapse of the federal deal?

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): I'm really happy that the member from Hamilton East is once again giving us the opportunity to talk about the NDP's lack of support for the agreement which the government of Ontario secured with the government of Canada on behalf of the people of Ontario.

I will ask once again, because I've asked this twice already in the House—you know, the problem that I find sometimes is that we don't celebrate what we have. We had an awesome five-year agreement between the government of Ontario and the government of Canada, on behalf of people whom the member from Hamilton East is supposed to be representing in a non-partisan fashion. Because when parents say they want child care for their kids, they don't say they want Liberal child care. They don't say they want—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you, Minister.

1510

Ms. Horwath: Minister, as you know, Quebec is in a much better position to protect its child care program because Quebec invested the provincial dollars required for a universal program, but you have used federal dollars to replace rather than supplement your own. Ontario municipalities want to know how they can continue to both plan for and deliver child care spaces. If you're really and truly concerned about maintaining a made-in-Ontario child care program, when will you provide municipalities with your written assurance that your promised funding, the \$300 million promised several years ago, is actually going to flow?

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: It was our government, the government of Ontario, that worked on behalf of every single riding, regardless of partisan ideology, in this province, including Hamilton East, where what's at stake is 2,390 spaces, \$93.61 million for Hamilton East. Hamilton East is also one of three demonstration sites that go well beyond early learning and child care into the larger, more comprehensive Best Start plan that our government has introduced.

Now, if you are really serious and sincere about protecting your constituents' interests, you would be standing beside us. You would be contacting your federal cousins, Jack Layton, Olivia Chow and all of those people who are in Ottawa, to say, "Stand by my constituents, please. We cannot afford to lose—"

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Thank you. New question.

CO-OP EDUCATION

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): My question is to the Minister of Education.

Minister, as you know, I'm extremely interested in anything to do with the education of Ontario's youth. Having spent more than 32 years teaching at schools in my riding of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, I like to think I have some knowledge of what's involved in transforming curriculum materials into practical knowledge for our students, knowledge that will serve them well when they leave the school system and look for spots in the workforce.

One of the key elements in translating information into marketable skills is hands-on learning. It's the old "teach a man to fish" principle: Provide a student with direct experience and they will not only have the skills required, but will have added an important plank to their CV and made contacts that will serve them well into the future.

I have read recently that you have initiated change in our high schools program to facilitate co-op education opportunities for students. Minister, could you elaborate on this initiative, please?

Hon. Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): I want to commend the member from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, because he has really understood well that what all members of this House need to advocate for is some redress for the 14,000 additional people who were dropping out under the last government who needed to have a response.

One of the less-known things is that the co-op experience was also reduced under those terms where students got left out and were not given consideration. Going right to the heart of that is to get at the reasons students drop out in the first place, which is quite often feeling that the school is irrelevant and that work, despite a lack of educational attainment, is an attractive option.

By enhancing co-op programs, which we're doing now by making them part of the compulsory curriculum—we're also putting them in as early as grade 10—we're giving young adults a chance to have one step in the work world, where they can still be learning, where they can still be acquiring a tremendous amount of knowledge but also finding out what ultimately they want to do, giving them the motivation to stay in school in the first place.

Mr. Brownell: Thank you, Minister. We can all agree that providing our youth with the experience they need to succeed increases their opportunity for happy and productive futures, which, in turn, increases the chance that Ontario will continue to thrive for decades to come.

Our schools must be able to provide our students with the greatest diversity of experiences possible, with hands-on experiences forming an essential part of their training. For schools to provide the opportunity is essential, but it's only half of the equation. Businesses of Ontario must be willing and prepared to accept these students and ensure the experiences gained are beneficial to their growth as individuals.

Minister, could you explain to us what mechanisms are in place to facilitate student placement at businesses in Ontario and how we are ensuring that our students

have positive and useful experiences during co-op placements?

Hon. Mr. Kennedy: I want again to enjoin all members of this House to join with the member opposite in his advocacy on behalf of these students, because we do. We've made a \$2-billion investment in education, part of the second year of a four-year plan, but it does require the involvement of the entire community.

Recently, I was in both Kingston and Niagara. The members there have been working closely with their local communities, as the member opposite has, to encourage businesses to take on some of these additional co-op opportunities. Conveying an education advantage to our students is conveying an economic advantage to our businesses in Ontario. It is a unity that we need to draw upon now in terms of creating the kinds of opportunities that students require.

We are trying to expand the number of co-op placements and the quality of co-op placements in areas like tourism and hospitality, in trades and so on. It's making a tremendous difference across the province. I would enjoin every member here to help the member from—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. New question.

DRIVER LICENCES

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Mr. Minister, in January you changed the rules regarding documentation required to get a driver's licence, in response to the Auditor General's report. However, young people who are reaching the age of 16 are having problems with your new requirements. They do not have acceptable identification with a signature. A 15-year-old does not have his own passport, he doesn't have his own health card, and student cards do not generally have signatures.

The choice that a 15-year-old becoming 16 has is that he must then apply for a passport before he can get his driver's licence, or he must acquire a health card before he can get his driver's licence. Both of these take time and money. Mr. Minister, what are you going to do to address this problem?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I want to thank the member for asking this question. It is important for us to protect the integrity of the driver's licence system. These were the recommendations made by the Auditor General, and these were the recommendations that the opposition party actually advocated that we should implement. That's exactly what we have done.

We are aware of some of the issues that our students are facing. There are other choices they can make. Some of those choices are: They can have an identity card that can be used made by the school, with a signature on it; the other is, they can apply for a health card, and we will facilitate that process so they can do that quickly and efficiently, so that the integrity of the driver's licence can be protected.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Supplementary? The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound): You don't understand, Mr. Minister: This does not work in rural Ontario. Again, you've made a law for the large urban centres. It doesn't work in rural Ontario. Just like Mr. Sterling said, they don't have a passport. You just said that they could get their health card and you would help to expedite that. Are you now taking over the health ministry? That doesn't work that easy.

We have kids phoning our office every day. They are unable to get their licence because of your new rules. What we'll ask you today is, would you consider looking at these rules again, and maybe the parents could sign? Something like that could work, or someone that can sign, say, for a passport, like a lawyer, an MP or an MPP—someone like that who could sign something that would allow them to do this.

There's just no way that they can get these licences. Mr. Minister, will you look at this again and help sort it out for rural Ontario, at least?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: We need to balance the security of the licence system with convenience, and we want to make sure that is done.

Let me say that there is only a very small number of students who are facing this kind of issue. Whatever this member is suggesting is actually part of those 13 documents that are required. There is one affidavit that can be provided to get the driver's licence. So I'm not sure what he's talking about. It would be worthwhile for him to look at the 13 requirements that we ask for the people to produce, and ask for the student to produce, but we need to protect the security of our driver's licence system. That was advocated by that party. That was advocated by the Auditor General. Now they are changing their mind on that issue as well.

1520

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Mr. Minister, the McGuinty government's refusal to pay its bills on downloaded services continues to break the backs, the hopes and the dreams of municipalities and communities across this province. The newest one is Tecumseh in southwestern Ontario. It is proposing to cut its funding for its annual corn fest—a tradition and a festival they've had for 31 years—because they have to pay your bills. Southwestern Ontario is already suffering because of your failure to address the farm income crisis and your refusal to pay your share for provincially mandated programs. Now the threat is to strip this community of an important local festival. When are you going to pay the bills you admit are your own?

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I find it a little hard to believe. We realize that municipalities are not having the easiest time of it, but on the other hand, let's look at all the posi-

tive programs that this government has initiated just within the last two and a half years that we've been in power:

We've got a COMRIF agreement to deal with the capital needs of rural Ontario that will spend up to \$400 million in phase 1, and fairly soon phase 2 will be announced, which will be another \$400 million.

When you look at the gas tax, which basically went to those municipalities that had transit systems, it's a lot of money. I'm trying to find the exact amount here.

When you look at the affordable housing programs that help those local service providers put up new affordable housing, some \$602 million is being spent by the province and the federal government.

There has been a lot of good things happening in the municipal world, and we intend to continue with that in the years to come.

Mr. Prue: I see from your answer there's no hope for Tecumseh, just as yesterday there was no hope for the town of Kenora, because yesterday the town of Kenora had to raise its taxes and said that they cannot even do the land ambulance, when you promised to bail them out.

You continue to require municipalities across the province to fund provincially mandated programs off their limited property tax base—something your government vehemently opposed in opposition, something that you oppose when you're out there in the scrum outside the Legislature. Yet failure to pay your share means communities are left to cut funding for important local services and, today, for the first time, a festival. When are you going to find the courage of your own convictions when in opposition and pay your share or, in plain and simple words, upload the download?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: I will agree with this member on one thing: that the previous government left this province, and particularly its municipalities, in one heck of a position as far as the downloading that was done. We're trying to correct that. We've started it in public health, for example. Slowly but surely, we're uploading the cost of public health from 50% that the municipal share is to only 25% in the years to come.

The gas tax money, by the way, is \$130 million that will be flowing to municipalities this year. If you include the federal gas tax money, it's another \$290 million that will be flowing to all municipalities across this province this year.

Just last week, at the ROMA conference, the Premier announced that land ambulance would be funded at a rate of 50-50 between the province and the municipalities. We are dealing with this situation, we're dealing with it in a very orderly matter and we want to make sure that the municipalities and, most of all, the people of Ontario are the beneficiaries of this.

ELDER ABUSE

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): My question is to the minister responsible for seniors. It's about elder abuse, a very

important topic. Elder abuse is often defined as any act or omission that harms a senior or jeopardizes his or her health or welfare. It's a topic that all Ontarians, particularly members in this House, are very concerned about, and it's certainly a problem that I hear a lot about from my hard-working local senior advisory group in my own riding.

We all have an interest in ensuring that our parents, grandparents, elderly friends and relatives live in a secure and safe environment. According to Stats Canada, somewhere between 4% and 10% of our seniors experience financial, emotional or physical abuse. Minister, these stats show us a really important issue. What type of initiative is this government taking to combat this problem of elder abuse?

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I'd like to thank the member for his excellent question. It's a very important issue he's dealing with, and I agree with the member that elder abuse is most certainly a serious matter and one which, over the years, has been underreported.

Our seniors deserve to live safely with dignity and as independently as possible, and that is why our government is involved in a number of initiatives to raise awareness and to help combat elder abuse. Last month, Monte Kwinter, the Minister of Community Safety, and I joined the Ontario Association of Crime Stoppers to launch the seniors' Crime Stoppers initiative. This initiative will provide seniors with education on how and when to use the Crime Stoppers program. It will also train staff at the Crime Stoppers after-hours answering service on communication with seniors and on elder abuse and neglect issues. In fact, this morning, I was at the third Ontario elder abuse conference in Mississauga being sponsored by our secretariat, the Ministry of the Attorney General and—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. McMeekin: Thanks very much, Minister. Having worked very closely with the staff from the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat during some time in another post, I'm familiar with the good work they do. I want to say to all of them, thank you for that great work. It often goes unheralded.

One thing that I feel is important, Minister, is to note that elder abuse takes place in many different settings. Stats are indicating that some 68% of our seniors who report that they were physically abused actually state that they were assaulted by a family member—very, very serious. While I'm glad to hear that our government is responding to this very serious matter, I also feel that the issue is so complex that we really need an overall strategy for it. Minister, can you describe for us in a bit more detail exactly what we plan to do as a government to end the scourge of elder abuse?

Hon. Mr. Bradley: Our government is working with others who want to build safer communities for our seniors. We're doing this with our partners at the Ontario

Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse through implementation of the Ontario strategy to combat elder abuse. This five-year strategy is designed to basically do three things: (1) help coordinate services at the community level; (2) help train staff on the front line on how to recognize and respond to elder abuse; and (3) help to raise public awareness of this growing problem.

Also in 2004, our government marked the first Elder Abuse Awareness Day, and I'm pleased to say that Ontario was the first province to establish an Elder Abuse Awareness Day. This is an important step toward raising awareness of the matter and asking Ontarians to make a collective effort to make Ontario finally free of elder abuse.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie—Lincoln): A question to the Minister of Finance: Your own ministry reports that out-migration from Ontario to other provinces is at record levels in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario—in fact, a factor triple that of 2004. Why are so many Ontarians leaving Dalton McGuinty's Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Employment is up, unemployment is down. Inflation is down and growth is up. Health care wait times are lower, and there are more nurses. More kids have access to post-secondary education at a lower cost under this government. Since we took office, 216,000 net new jobs in Ontario. Let me tell you, as long as one family, one individual in this province, wants a job, this government won't rest.

1530

What do we know from the other side? They want to cut taxes and close hospitals. They don't share our commitment to post-secondary education—\$6.2 billion invested to take Ontario to a leadership position. This party has a plan for the province. It's working. Jobs are up, unemployment is down. Our record is better—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Hudak: Minister, people are voting with their own feet. Maybe you didn't listen to the first part of the question, but record levels of Ontarians are now leaving Dalton McGuinty's Ontario to go to better offers in other provinces and territories—seven out of 13. I mentioned last week in the Legislature that the number of bankruptcies growing in Ontario is the worst record in the entire country and, sadly, some 88,000 manufacturing jobs, well-paying jobs, have left Dalton McGuinty's Ontario. I heard the minister, but people are voting with their own feet. Can we hope for some relief from your high-tax, high-energy and runaway spending budgets when you present this spring?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Ontario got its relief in October 2003, when they chose Dalton McGuinty to be the Premier of Ontario. Let's look at the record: 74,000 new jobs in the education sector, 62,000 in finance and insurance, 43,000 construction jobs and 21,000 professional,

scientific and technical service jobs. The indices that need to be up are up. The ones that should be down are down. This government's plan is working. We're undoing the mess they left in health care, in education, and as long as one family wants a job, as long as one person needs help, this government will stand up for them and undo your legacy of neglect of health and neglect of education, because we have a better way and we're going to see it right through.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'd like to get to petitions.

PETITIONS

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario signed by a great number of my constituents in Oxford county, and also in counties and ridings around the province.

"Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

"Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

"Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community."

I affix my signature to the petition.

PENSION PLANS

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which reads:

"Whereas every Ontario worker has the right to a secure pension that is indexed to inflation and provides the dignity of a stable and sufficient income for retirement;

"Whereas pensions represent workers' deferred wages and all pension contributions belong to the workers;

"Whereas people who work all their lives deserve the right to retire with a decent pension at age 65 without having to worry about making ends meet;

"Whereas the pension system is sorely in need of reform; it hasn't been reviewed since 1987 and many

Ontario seniors have seen the value of their pensions vastly reduced over the years;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"We call on the government of Ontario to form a special legislative committee on pension reform to study ways to ensure that all workers have the ability: (1) to participate in a pension plan; (2) to have a real say in how the plan is managed and governed; and (3) to have vesting from day one, indexing, portability from job to job and absolute protection of their pension through a much-enhanced pension benefit guarantee fund and stronger provincial legislation."

I agree with this petition. I have signed it and I send it to the Clerk's table by way of Mark.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the people of Ontario expect the government of Canada to honour existing agreements with the government of Ontario;

"Whereas provinces and territories negotiated agreements with the federal government to ensure Canadians would have access to early learning and child care programs that are high quality, affordable, universally inclusive and developmental;

"Whereas parents in Ontario have demonstrated a high demand for greater access to high-quality early learning and child care programs;

"Whereas Ontario's early learning and child care agreement with the government of Canada would provide Ontario families with at least 25,000 new high-quality, regulated child care spaces in the first three years;

"Whereas Ontario's early learning and child care agreement represents a \$1.9-billion investment over five years in high-quality early learning and child care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the government of Ontario in calling on the government of Canada to honour Ontario's early learning and child care agreement, for the sake of the thousands of Ontario families who would benefit from it."

I agree with this petition and I affix my name to it. I give it to Sarah.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario has an inconsistent policy for access to new cancer treatments while these drugs are under review for funding; and

"Whereas cancer patients taking oral chemotherapy may apply for a section 8 exception under the Ontario drug benefit plan, with no such exception policy in place for intravenous cancer drugs administered in hospital; and

"Whereas this is an inequitable, inconsistent and unfair policy, creating two classes of cancer patients with further inequities on the basis of personal wealth and the willingness of hospitals to risk budgetary deficits to provide new intravenous chemotherapy treatments; and

"Whereas cancer patients have the right to the most effective care recommended by their doctors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to provide immediate access to Velcade and other intravenous chemotherapy while these new cancer drugs are under review and provide a consistent policy for access to new cancer treatments that enables oncologists to apply for exceptions to meet the needs of patients."

This has my signature of support as well.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that's been sent to me from people in Caledonia and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we are asking that access to Velcade treatment be made available in Ontario. Ontario is the only province in Canada not currently making funding available for this drug, even though approximately 40% of people diagnosed with multiple myeloma in Canada are from Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To provide immediate access to Velcade, while the review process continues, so that this treatment is available to patients in Ontario as it is in every other province of Canada."

I agree with the petitioners and I have affixed my signature to this.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Mr. Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Human Rights Code guarantees the right to work in an environment free from sexual harassment, and Lori Dupont was the victim of sexual harassment by the man who murdered her at their place of employment; and

"Whereas the inquest into the workplace murder of Theresa Vince proved that sexual harassment is a dangerous workplace circumstance that can and has resulted in death; and

"Whereas sexual harassment is a significant and widespread occupational health and safety hazard for women in the workplace, and current workplace legislation has proven to be ineffective in preventing gendered workplace violence and murder; and

"Whereas the Occupational Health and Safety Act demands an inquest whenever a workplace death occurs, and Lori Dupont deserves no less than any other worker; and

"Whereas the coroner's office has appointed the domestic violence death review committee to examine the death of Lori Dupont, whose murder is both an intimate femicide and an act of extreme workplace

violence, and because the DVDRC does not have the mandate or the expertise to critically examine those aspects of her murder that pertain to the workplace, and because the DVDRC will not conduct a public review;

"We, the undersigned Ontario residents, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to conduct a full and public inquest into the workplace murder of Lori Dupont at Hotel-Dieu Grace Hospital in Windsor, Ontario, on Saturday, November 12, 2005. We respectfully make this petition in memory and in honour of Lori Dupont."

There are some 9,000 names on this petition, and I too have affixed my signature.

1540

PROPERTY RIGHTS

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): This petition is entitled "Support the Land Rights and Responsibilities Act." It was launched at the Belleville convention of the Ontario Landowners Association.

"To the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is silent on property rights; and

"Whereas the Alberta Bill of Rights specifically protects the right to the enjoyment of property; and

"Whereas the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms provides that 'Every person has a right to the peaceful enjoyment and free disposition of his property, except to the extent provided by law'; and

"Whereas Ontario no longer has property or land rights;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To pass Bill 57, the Land Rights and Responsibilities Act, 2006."

I affix my signature to this petition.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that has been signed by hundreds of people from the Blenheim, Chatham and Leamington areas. I want to thank Roger Renaud, SEIU Local 1.0n representative, and the stewards for gathering the petitions and sending them to me. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has introduced Bill 36, the Local Health Integration Act; and

"Whereas this legislation will integrate, amalgamate, restructure and privatize health care services; and

"Whereas health care workers will see their jobs put up for auction through competitive bidding; and

"Whereas many Ontarians will be forced to travel further for medical care; and

"Whereas LHIN boards are unelected, order-in-council appointments, their allegiance is not to the local communities but to the Minister of Health;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"The Legislative Assembly delay passage of Bill 36 until a strategic plan for health care is developed with broad public consultation. And further, Bill 36 be amended to include a human resource plan; include all health care providers; ensure no health care providers, LHIN or the Minister of Health can privatize any health care services through a competitive bidding process."

I agree with the petitioners, and I've affixed my signature to these.

OMERS PENSION FUND

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly that I'm going to read on behalf of some constituents in Mississauga West. I tried to get it in last week and didn't make it, so I'll get it in this week. It reads as follows:

"Whereas no government of Ontario employees are covered by pension benefits from the Ontario municipal employees retirement system, known as OMERS; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has proposed, through Bill 206, to pass control and management of OMERS to the municipalities and employees who pay into and benefit from OMERS pension benefits; and

"Whereas all members of OMERS will have access to the same base pension plan; nothing in Bill 206 would affect current pension payments; and retirees will continue to receive their pensions as usual; and

"Whereas extensive debate, consultation and amendments on Bill 206 have resulted in a fair and equitable distribution of representation, governance and dispute resolution;

"Be it therefore resolved:

"That the government of Ontario should enact Bill 206, An Act to revise the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System Act."

It's my pleasure to add my signature to this petition and to ask page Michael to carry it for me.

SPECIAL CARE HOMES

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas hundreds of vulnerable adults live in homes for special care that provide them a warm and secure, stable and friendly environment which allows them to lead fulfilling lives; and

"Whereas the alternative for many of these individuals is a life of homelessness on the street; and

"Whereas special care homes have had only a single 3% increase since 1999, which in no way matches the rising costs they face; and

"Whereas the Liberal government promised Ontario in the election they would 'significantly increase supportive housing options for those suffering from mental illness';

"Therefore we, the undersigned, call on the government to bring in an immediate increase in funding to homes for special care."

As I am in agreement with this, I will affix my signature and give it to page Chelsi.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 3907.

"Whereas rebuilding our post-secondary education system is critical to the future of our communities and our province; and

"Whereas high tuition user fees are resulting in massive student debt; and

"Whereas Ontario ranks second-last amongst all provinces in terms of total PSE budget received from government grants, and has the highest percentage of total post-secondary education revenue from private sources; and

"Whereas working and learning conditions must be healthy and safe because working conditions are learning conditions; and

"Whereas the deferred maintenance cost at Ontario university campuses is estimated to have already reached the \$2-billion mark;

"We, the undersigned, support the Canadian Union of Public Employees' call on the provincial government to invest sufficient public funds that will:

"(1) Restore public money cut from operating funds since 1995 and bring Ontario up to the national average for funding post-secondary education;

"(2) Finance the \$1.98 billion needed for deferred maintenance; and

"(3) Provide the funding needed to continue the tuition freeze beyond 2006 and increase grants to working-class families."

This was signed by hundreds of signatories, as well as myself.

CHILD CARE

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the people of Ontario expect the government of Canada to honour existing agreements with the government of Ontario;

"Whereas provinces and territories negotiated agreements with the federal government to ensure Canadians would have access to early learning and child care programs that are high quality, affordable, universally inclusive and developmental;

"Whereas parents in Ontario have demonstrated a high demand for greater access to high-quality early learning and child care programs;

"Whereas Ontario's early learning and child care agreement with the government of Canada would provide Ontario families with at least 25,000 new high-quality, regulated child care spaces in the first three years;

"Whereas Ontario's early learning and child care agreement represents a \$1.9-billion investment over five years in high-quality early learning and child care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the government of Ontario in calling on the government of Canada to honour Ontario's early learning and child care agreement, for the sake of the thousands of Ontario families who would benefit from it."

I will affix my signature, and give this petition to Mark.

CURRICULUM

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition from students from Muskoka, and it says,

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Education plans to remove the study of derivatives from the grade 12 mathematics curriculum; and

"Whereas the grade 12 university preparation course Advanced Functions and Introductory Calculus is designed for students intending to study university programs that will involve calculus; and

"Whereas the course currently provides an introduction to the fundamental concepts of calculus, which are also required in grade 12 physics; and

"Whereas it contains three strands: advanced functions, in which students explore the properties and applications of polynomial, exponential and logarithmic functions; underlying concepts of calculus, in which students develop an understanding of the basic concepts of calculus by analyzing the rates of change involved in applications; and derivatives and applications, in which students develop, consolidate and apply to graphing and problem-solving the rules and properties of differentiation; and

"Whereas all of these strands are requirements for most university programs, and to remove any of them from the high school curriculum will leave the students of Ontario at a disadvantage when compared to the students from other provinces;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To ensure that the Ministry of Education continues to retain all parts of the current grade 12 mathematics curriculum and stop making changes that put the future careers of Ontario students at risk."

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRONGER CITY OF TORONTO
FOR A STRONGER ONTARIO ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 CRÉANT
UN TORONTO PLUS FORT
POUR UN ONTARIO PLUS FORT

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 13, 2006, on the motion for second reading of Bill 53, An Act to

revise the City of Toronto Acts, 1997 (Nos. 1 and 2), to amend certain public Acts in relation to municipal powers and to repeal certain private Acts relating to the City of Toronto / *Projet de loi 53, Loi révisant les lois de 1997 Nos 1 et 2 sur la cité de Toronto, modifiant certaines lois d'intérêt public en ce qui concerne les pouvoirs municipaux et abrogeant certaines lois d'intérêt privé se rapportant à la cité de Toronto.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I understand that the member for Beaches-East York has the floor.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): It is indeed a delight and a pleasure. On the last occasion, just to recap where I was before the time ran out, I had described, for most of the first 15 minutes, what Toronto was like before amalgamation, what had happened, in fact, to the city as a result of amalgamation, and how the city really lost its soul. The city was unable to look after its needs, its wants and its desires. Through a series of events, all of the monies that were available in terms of the reserves that the six municipalities of metropolitan Toronto had built up over many years were dissipated; they were gone. The city now finds itself in the unenviable position of being amalgamated and having no money. I went on, then, to talk a little bit about the upload. That's about where I got to when the time ran out.

1550

I'd like to talk today about the remaining elements of the speech, which I listed the last time. I wanted to talk about the consultative process, about taxis—let me just get them all here so I don't miss any—about electoral reform. I wanted to talk about the board of trade, uploading the download etc. That's where I'm going to go today.

First of all, the consultative process: There's a very good quote that I found here. I believe it's from the minister; yes, it is. It's from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. He waxed eloquent on the province's new relationship with the city of Toronto. I want to quote him, because this is what he's promised, and then I want to contrast that with what is really happening. This is a quote from him: "Ontario has been a leader in fostering a strong consultative relationship with its municipal sector. We believe that the relationship between the province and the city of Toronto should be one of ongoing reciprocal consultation. The city should be advised of proposed future provincial directions, and we would expect the city to consult with the province on upcoming decisions or policy directions that affect the provincial government. This is far removed from the paternalistic approach that the province has traditionally taken. Instead, it's a new kind of relationship—a relationship between peers, a true partnership. That's the kind of autonomy our government wants for the city of Toronto."

That's what the minister had to say when he introduced this act. That's what the minister would have you believe is the true intention of this act and his true intention when dealing with the city of Toronto. But if

you actually look at what is contained within the bill, there are some very puzzling and disturbing elements that I would ask members of the Legislature to have a very close and careful look at.

The first is the provincial override. This is an override put in the legislation that, notwithstanding what the city of Toronto and its council want to do in setting up its own governance structure, notwithstanding what the city of Toronto and its council want to do with electoral reforms and how people are elected and how the boards and committees sit and who sits on them, the province of Ontario has an override, the ability to go beyond, without the say-so of the city of Toronto, its mayor and its council. It is contained right in the bill that that is what the province allows itself to do. Now, I wonder, how does that jibe with the promise and the eloquent words of the minister? Quite frankly, it does not.

It reserves the right to appoint an executive committee—the province—and it allows the mayor, not the council but one person, to appoint council committees, to appoint a deputy mayor or deputy mayors and to appoint all the chairs of the boards and the standing committees of the city of Toronto. How does that jibe with democracy? How does that jibe with the province of Ontario having a mature relationship of consultation? I don't think it does at all.

There is much in the bill, and there's been much talk about this much ballyhooed proposal to allow the city of Toronto, alone among municipalities, to impose taxation for the first time. The taxation it is allowed to impose under this bill is limited to entertainment, alcohol and cigarettes. The city of Toronto has estimated, and I believe the province of Ontario has concurred, that should they do so, it could bring in as much as \$50 million. This is not a power that should be contained in this bill, quite frankly, and I think that the municipality of the city of Toronto wishes it were not there.

I will tell you, and everyone will know, that the mayor has been up here asking for money. The newspapers in Toronto, the television, the radio shows, have all talked about Toronto's huge need for money. I'll get to that later, because I think the key to that is in uploading the download. But what this government does is give an authority that no municipality has ever had before to tax those sin things that take place in the city of Toronto. The entertainment, the shows, the movie theatres and everything else can be taxed in a way that they are not taxed elsewhere in this province or elsewhere in this country. It gives them the authority to tax cigarettes, so that cigarettes would cost one price in Toronto and a lower price everywhere else in Ontario. It gives them the authority to tax alcohol that is dispensed in restaurants and bars and in the entertainment industry throughout this city.

There has already been a public reaction to this, and the public reaction has been negative. People do not want to pay taxes in excess of what they are already paying and do not want to see another level of taxation meted out by the city of Toronto over and above that which is already done by the province.

I go back to see what people have said about this, and I come first to a very good quotation on the city of Toronto act from the board of trade: "Grunwald"—the chair of the board of trade—"notes that with the provincial legislation to be introduced today, 'The city and province will have addressed two major issues—governance reform and new powers and authority. Now they and the federal government need to ensure that Toronto has the financial support and arrangements required to meet its investment and spending needs. Then we'll have a city ready to thrive, succeed and meet the requirements of its people and businesses.'"

I have to question the members, particularly the members opposite, how \$50 million is going to do that, how \$50 million is going to wash in a city that came here last week to tell the Premier that they were \$212 million short again this year and that they will be more than that, and increasingly more than that, in the years to come. Quite frankly, it just does not happen.

I want to talk as well about the second quotation, from Mayor Miller. I think Mayor Miller has said it all in this quotation. This is about something that's not contained in this act, but it's something that this government is forcing against the will of the people of Toronto on its waterfront. Mayor Miller has said, "The proposed plant will be adjacent to the long-awaited Lake Ontario Park and the future Filmport studios. To date, the province has been a genuine partner on Toronto's waterfront revitalization. This proposal"—the megaplant—"flies in the face of the progress we are beginning to see emerge." David Miller, February 10, 2006.

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): Does he like this bill?

Mr. Prue: No, he does not.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Prue: This government has promised to consult. This government chooses not to consult whenever it is convenient to them. When it is convenient to consult about a city of Toronto act, they consult with the mayor. They still have the right and still impose their will inside the body of the legislation. When it suits their convenience that they don't want to consult, when they make decisions to impose a megaplant on Toronto's waterfront against the wishes of the mayor and the council and against the wishes of Toronto Hydro, against the regeneration committee that is looking at fixing Toronto's waterfront, against the neighbourhoods, the citizens and the communities, then there is no consultation at all. I do not believe that this government truly and honestly wishes to consult. I wish that the words of the minister were true words, but when he says that in accordance with this act, I have to question very strongly whether that is true.

I have to question it more. I'd like to go on to electoral reform because there's nothing really in here about electoral reform of the city of Toronto. There is, "You will conduct your elections, and if we don't like how you are elected or the governance structure, we'll impose our

own.” That’s really good electoral reform. I’m being sarcastic, if you haven’t caught that.

1600

I watched in awe what unfolded last week, because it was just last year that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing told people that four-year municipal elections were not on the radar. Then, with no consultation, with absolutely nothing, with no discussion in this Legislature, the Premier goes down and announces to the ROMA conference that there’s going to be a four-year term. I’m not sure whether it’s a good thing or a bad thing. I could see merits in both sides of the argument. I can see what the newspaper columns are saying in Toronto. Some are in favour of it; some are opposed to it; some think it’s the worst thing that’s ever happened to democracy in this city. But you know what wasn’t done? There was absolutely no consultation—here we have the city of Toronto act before us—with the mayor and the council of the city of Toronto, and there was no public consultation in any way—

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): They asked for it.

Mr. Prue: They didn’t ask for it. There was no public consultation even inside this Legislature.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I’d like to hear the person who has the floor.

The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Prue: If my honourable friends want to help me out, they should at least provide factual and correct information while they heckle.

I would suggest that this is a very big bone of contention among many of the people of Toronto. They believe that, had you really wanted to consult with them, you would have done so and that the mayor would not have used the occasion to simply go down and announce a fait accompli: that he was going to do something which his own minister, one year before, had said was simply not on the radar.

The city asked you, this Legislature, this government, to do something last year. They asked you to reform the way fundraising was done in municipal elections in Toronto, Ontario’s biggest city. They know, their council knows, their auditor knows, their finance department knows and anyone who has studied it knows that an awful lot of money is collected in municipal elections in Toronto. They wanted a reform package. They wanted a package that did a couple of things. The most important was to limit the amount of money that unions and corporations could give to those people who were trying to obtain a municipal seat, whether it be on a school board, whether it be on council, whether it be the mayor himself or herself. They wanted to limit the amount of money that could come from corporations and unions. They thought long and hard about this, and they sent that request in a council motion to this Legislature. What did the minister do with it? He did absolutely nothing with it. He sat on it for a year. He sat on it until it could no longer be done. Here was the big reform that the city of

Toronto wanted, but was that on the radar? No, it was not on the radar. It wasn’t even looked at; it wasn’t even contemplated. There was no mature discussion that was being said was going to happen.

What else did they want in that legislation? They wanted to—I’ll come back to that. I’ll come back to electoral reform later. I can’t remember the second point.

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: There you go; escaped right out of my head. Okay.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): You know what my mother says about it.

Mr. Prue: I know.

All right. I come back to consultation and reform. We were in this Legislature last fall. There was a piece of legislation on the books that we were debating. It was Bill 169. You will remember that bill. It was a transportation bill, most of the provisions of which were agreed to by all members of the House. But there was one very contentious provision, and that was the scooping provision at Mississauga airport. Members will also remember that at that time there were many and multiple demonstrations of Toronto taxi drivers going around and around this building honking and beeping their horns and holding a demonstration outside and demanding that the minister come out and speak to his proposal and why he was doing these scooping provisions within a transportation bill. I remember at the time that the minister would not go outside, but the minister did address the House through a series of questions put forward by members of the opposition as to why he was putting in a scooping provision that only affected the taxis at Pearson airport and did not affect the multiple scooping that he knows and we know and the taxi drivers know takes place in reverse every day in this city.

The minister said he was satisfied with his bill—and all members of the Liberal Party voted for it—because the city of Toronto bill was going to resolve the difficulties that the taxi drivers in Toronto had. So you can imagine the eager anticipation I had in reading through the bill and trying to find that magic provision, trying to find exactly where the city of Toronto cab drivers were finally going to get equality with those in Mississauga. Do you know what? It’s not there at all. Of course it’s not there. What there is is an opportunity for the city of Toronto, under the provisions of this legislation, to put in a licence for limousine drivers to pick up in Toronto. That means that all those who are now licensed in the city of Mississauga and who pick up at the airport may be required by bylaw to get a licence for Toronto.

The city of Toronto, of course, could charge any amount of money for that. It could charge \$5, \$100, \$1,000, \$10,000. It doesn’t limit the amount they can ask. But I will tell you how it is an absolutely useless provision. It’s useless because no matter how much money that licence sells for to pick up passengers in the city of Toronto, unless it is a very small amount, anyone from inside the boundaries of this city who wants to go to the airport will of course have to pay more to offset the cost

of the licence. So if the cost of the licence is a large amount—more than \$1,000—one can expect, rationally and reasonably, that the citizens of this city are going to end up having to pay higher fares. That's the very first thing that's going to happen: higher fares if you choose to take a limo rather than a taxi to the airport.

The second thing is that it is going to make enforcement nearly impossible. Although the city will be able to claim an additional amount of money, there are thousands of kilometres of road in this city. It's not a closed quarter or half kilometre road that exists at Pearson airport, where the RCMP, the OPP and the local police can look out for scoopers, can look at the licences as they are lining up in front of the terminal to pick someone up and see who has the right licence and who doesn't. Even though the city of Toronto can collect whatever they want, and even though the people can pay even more money, it will be impossible, even if all the money is used to hire police and follow cabs around, to stop the scooping.

There you go. The city of Toronto cabbies were told that this bill was going to help them. They were told they were going to be consulted. They were told that this bill was going to work for them, the same way as Bill 169 is working for the limo drivers at the airport. It is not, in fact, the case; it is not the case at all. Those Liberals who followed the minister and said it was going to work have an obligation to change that provision and to strengthen it.

I go on to talk about uploading the download. I think this is really where we need to talk about that. I would like to start with a quote from David Crombie, president and CEO of the Canadian Urban Institute, former mayor of Toronto, former member of Parliament, former federal cabinet minister. This is the quote, December 5, 2005: "When the Harris government downloaded social services and social housing, I said at the time that it was wrong in principle and disastrous in practice. It is still the case, and it would be a responsible action for the current government to upload both these services to restore the balance."

Over the past number of weeks—as a matter of fact, over the past number of months and maybe even a year—I have been asking those questions in the House. I have been asking questions of the minister, of the government, of the finance minister in committee, and of others. I want to ask, what is involved in this download? What was downloaded that is so wrong?

1610

The answer is quite simple. There are five areas of provincial jurisdiction where the money is taken from those who are homeowners, business owners and apartment dwellers in the city of Toronto, and in fact in all municipalities. All municipalities suffer from this, but we're talking about the city of Toronto today, and I just want to say why it is particularly important to the city of Toronto.

I'm reading here from Statistics Canada and from the office of the chief administrative officer, city of Toronto.

Those are quotations in a little work from the University of Western Ontario by Luis Silva. He quotes these two. I'm just going to take it from the original source. It says, "While Toronto comprises less than half the region's population"—that's the GTA—"the city has 71% of the region's low-income families, two thirds of the single parents, two thirds of children and seniors living in poverty, 80% of the homeless and three quarters of the tenants." That is the lot of Toronto.

Toronto is being forced, in spite of these social difficulties and in spite of the lack of money, to pay a great deal of money, as all municipalities are, for child care, social assistance, social housing, ambulance and public health. I know that ambulance may have been slightly resolved last week, but I'd just like to go over the amounts of money that ratepayers in the province of Ontario are paying through their municipal taxes—money that should not be paid on the backs of homeowners and business taxes and money that should not be paid by those who live in apartments.

Child care: The municipal amount that is taken from homeowners is \$193.4 million. The amount for social assistance is \$1.3309 billion. The amount for social housing is \$880 million, ambulance is \$312.7 million, and public health is \$266.4 million. Some of these were supposed to be cost-shared under the terms of the previous government. Child care was supposed to be cost-shared, I understand, at 80-20. I could be mistaken on that, but I believe it was 80-20. It's not 80-20 at all; it's 73% by the province and nearly 27% by the municipalities. So they're paying even more. Social assistance, which is cost-shared at 80-20, is not 80-20 at all; it's presently 73% by the province and nearly 27% by the municipalities. Social housing—I'm not sure what the cost share was supposed to be—is being borne largely by the municipalities, 60%, to 40% for the province. Ambulance is 55-45, and that was supposed to be cost-shared at least 50-50. Public health, which was supposed to be 75-25, is in fact the municipality paying 52% and the province paying 48%. So the province is not paying its own bills. The province is simply not doing it. The province needs to start very seriously considering uploading the download.

I was a little heartened last week when I heard that land ambulance costs were going to be uploaded in some way. It was \$300 million spread out over three years, which is \$100 million a year. Some \$100 million a year will bring it back into line with where it's supposed to be, not having the whole thing uploaded, which it should be, but in fact only the province paying its portion. As near as I can understand, that is all that is going to happen: The province will assume its portion. The municipalities cannot afford to pay for this service. The city of Toronto—and this is the city of Toronto bill—is seeing its core starting to suffer. I would not say it has gone as far as some American cities did 10 and 20 years ago. I do, though, see potholes where I never saw them. I see sidewalks crumbling where they did not crumble before. I see parks where there is litter and I see garbage on the streets. I see homeless in a way that I have never seen in

my entire life. Although I have lived my entire life in this city, I have never seen as many homeless people or such destitution as I see today.

I invite all of you, if you really want to see what that homeless situation is, to take a few minutes, go down to the Eaton Centre and go out the back door. There's a little church there, the Church of the Holy Trinity, and on that church is a memorial to those who have died on our streets. If you look at it, you have to know how very sad the reality of homelessness and poverty is to this city, a city that can no longer afford to look after these people, a city that watches them die on the streets.

Back in the early 1990s, there were 10 and 12 names per year on those rolls. Today, there are 50 and 60 and 100; that's 50 or 60 or 100 people who die on the streets without adequate social care, care that the city cannot afford to pay for, care that the city struggles to provide and cannot find the money to do so. This is part of the download. This is what the province needs to do to get those people into decent homes, to get them into shelters, to get them proper medication and doctors. Go down, take a look. It's very moving. It's very simple. All it is are names on a church board, and the names are added to every month as people die on these cruel streets.

I would like to talk some more about the download. The Toronto Board of Trade came up with what I thought was a fairly reasonable, well-thought-out plan. The Toronto Board of Trade recommends—and this is in conjunction with the city of Toronto act:

“(1) Ensure that Toronto can continue to fuel Ontario's economic growth by:

“—taking back the responsibility for funding Toronto's social service and social housing programs (the city of Toronto should, however, continue to administer programs under contract to the province where it is best placed to deliver these services) and revert to the government of Ontario's pre-1996 transit funding formula; or

“—providing the city of Toronto with new revenue sources and tax room that would enable the city to meet its expenditure responsibilities in an equitable, effective and accountable way; and

“—providing Ontario's municipalities with a 100% rebate on PST paid to the provincial government.”

This is their first recommendation. I think the Toronto Board of Trade understands that this is not about an act in which this government can impose its will on governance structure with the citizens and the council of the city of Toronto, and it is not about the little, tiny things contained in the act, that the city no longer has to come to the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of the Environment to ask for permission to put a speed hump on one of the roads where they're trying to slow traffic. These are the kinds of small and perhaps welcome measures that are contained within the bill, but it is certainly not what the citizens of the queen city, the capital city of this province, want or expect.

The board of trade has said it very well. You are going to have to show not only your willingness to consult, not

only your willingness to allow the city to have some form of favourable and/or charter status, but you are going to have to give the necessary funding to make the city work. This is sadly what is not here, and it's sadly what we want to hear, because if there was a commitment on the part of this government that there would be funding available to all of Ontario's cities and, in this case, with the city of Toronto, we would all know that the new city of Toronto act could work. But in the absence of funding and in the absence of consultation, we are left to wonder, what good is it to raise cigarette and alcohol taxes and taxes at movie theatres? What good is it going to be to have a new city council where you can substitute your own structure for what the citizens want? What good is it if there are not going to be new revenue sources and tax room? That's a question I have to ask each of the government members.

1620

They go on to say:

“(2) Ensure the city of Toronto's governance structure is strengthened prior to receiving new powers or revenue sources under the City of Toronto Act by,” and they list three things:

“—strengthening the power of the mayor by allowing him/her to select an executive committee from city council. Executive committee members would chair the city's standing committees,” etc. I'm not sure I agree with that, but that certainly is their position. I think the second two are far more important:

“—ensuring that Toronto has an innovative, professional civil service that works at arm's length from the elected representatives; and

“—strengthening the city of Toronto's checks and balances, including a more powerful Auditor General and Integrity Commissioner.”

I want to just describe to this Legislature what the city of Toronto has done in that regard; I have to take my hat off to them. I was there, and I know Councillor Balkissoon was there. We were both on the audit committee, and we both fought very, very hard to have an Auditor General. We believed that process was going to work. We knew that the Auditor General, once instituted, would be able to find if there was any corruption, if there was any waste, if there was any money that was not flowing in the right hands. And it was the Auditor General, in combination with city of Toronto councillors, who uncovered the MFP scandal. That's who found it; it wasn't anyone else. It wasn't the newspapers; it wasn't this Legislature. It was the Auditor General. That institution is working very well.

I have looked, and I don't know how this bill strengthens. It's in the bill, but it's something that already exists.

The city of Toronto civil service is exemplary. I have worked with them and with the civil service in the province of Ontario. I have to tell you that I think they are two of the finest public bodies with whom I have ever been associated. The men and women work hard, they work with loyalty, they work with great knowledge. I

only wish sometimes, when I hear about cutbacks and other things, that there were even more of them. I wish there were even more of them to do the good job they do, to provide the services they provide. I would tell you, and I think most citizens would agree with me, that the services they provide are absolutely necessary to the well-being of this province and of the city of Toronto, and to the well-being of all the municipalities and all the people who live here.

I talked about downloading. I need to talk for a few minutes about property tax reform, because this too will have to be done in conjunction with any changes in monies that flow from the province to the city or from the city to the province. When some of the uploads are downloaded or downloads are uploaded, depending on the mood of any particular Legislature at the time, there is a very real need for tax reform. The questions have been asked in this Legislature, and the answers have not been forthcoming.

When the previous government, the Mike Harris government, instituted MPAC, the Municipal Property Assessment Corp., and current value assessment on all municipalities, there were many promises made at that time to ordinary citizens that it was going to be revenue-neutral. There were promises made that it was going to be phased in over a period of time so that no one was hurt unduly. There were promises made that there were going to be five-year rolling averages. Some of those things have not happened.

We can see what is happening in the tax revolts that are starting to take place in some of Canada's larger cities. There are three places where they are going to take place. They're going to take place downtown, as they take place in Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton and London—any of the larger cities or towns. The tax burden is primarily downtown. When the housing rates go up, they go up in the more urbanized areas as opposed to the suburban ones first. I will tell you that that will happen. I will tell my good friends from Scarborough that ever since amalgamation, ever since it was all put under one roof, the taxes have not gone up in Scarborough once, have they? I'm looking at you as you smile, because they haven't. They have not gone up once. They have not gone up in Etobicoke or North York either. They've gone down. But they have gone up in Toronto, York and East York as a result. The people there know full well that they are paying an increasing burden of the taxes.

Mr. Duguid: They should.

Mr. Prue: As my friend here from Scarborough Centre says, "They should."

Mr. Duguid: They're paying their share.

Mr. Prue: "They're paying their share," is what he says. I want to tell you, though, that there is an awful lot of angst out there in the downtown area.

The second place where taxes go up is along waterfronts. If you live in Ottawa, as does my good friend from Ottawa—Orléans, he will tell you that the properties that are going up fastest in value, and the taxes that rise accordingly, are those that are along the river—is it not

so?—the same as it is true in Toronto along the lakefront, along the bluffs in Scarborough and along the rivers and creeks where people have lakefront or riverfront property inside municipalities.

The third place, of course, that they go up is on recreational properties. The recreational property owners in Ontario are starting to see double-digit increases in their taxing as a result of the cottage properties and the retirement properties that many people have bought.

There are a great many problems with this and it requires some considerable property tax reform. When questions are asked of the minister in this House, he pooh-poohs it. He says it's not important. He says the government is not going there. But I believe that if you are looking at municipal reform, if you are looking at reform in the city of Toronto, a reform is long overdue in terms of how people are taxed. The easiest and simplest thing to do is to upload the download. If you can take \$3.3 billion off municipal taxes, you can do a great deal to assuage the consternation of ordinary citizens about their municipal taxes. You can take it off. You can do it. I know we can do it in a better way. But the second problem you are going to have to look at, and we are going to have to look at, is long-term, five-year rolling averages so that ordinary people do not suffer losing their home.

I want to go on and talk lastly, because I have a few minutes left, about consultation with the city of Toronto, or the lack thereof. I think I would not be doing my own community much good if I did not talk about the fiasco of the port lands, so I would like to end it with that. This is a government that promises under this bill to consult with council and with its citizens but has chosen to absolutely not consult with the citizens, with the council, with the waterfront regeneration, with Toronto Hydro or with anyone else because it is in their interest, they believe, at this time to unilaterally impose an energy solution on the city of Toronto.

The city of Toronto, of course, has come up with its own plan. I have to tell you that its own plan—I got it on Friday—is such a superior plan. It is absolutely superior in all ways to that being put forward by the government. It focuses on conservation and demand-side management. It will build entirely within the restored R.L. Hearn station, therefore not taking up valuable land on the waterfront. It will have community benefits in a manner consistent with the long-range plans for the development of the port lands area in Toronto. It will have an environmental impact, because the new group is committed to pursuing an unabridged environmental assessment and public consultation process, something the government's plan does not do. Further, construction of the new proposal requires little or no excavation of hazardous materials and no new penetrations of the channel seawall.

The project cost—even the darkest heart has to listen to this one—at 582 milliwatts, if it is completely built out, is 24% less on a per milliwatt basis than the total project of the Portlands Energy Centre as reported in the Minister of Energy's February 10 directive. At 291

milliwatts, which is the first phase, the project is 12% less expensive on a cost-per-milliwatt basis.

That's what is being proposed. That's what Toronto Hydro, the city of Toronto, the mayor and everybody wants to talk about. But does this government want to talk with the elected officials? You say so in this bill but you don't do it in reality. In reality, you do nothing of the sort.

1630

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): Yes, we do.

Mr. Prue: No, you do not. My friend says he does. My friend says that they do talk. They do not talk meaningfully. I have already quoted the mayor on this.

The mayor is very upset about what you're doing on the port lands, as is the council and as is everybody involved in this city. "This proposal would allow for the repowering of the Hearn station using modern, high-efficiency cogeneration. It would restore the Hearn station, which is a designated historic property under the Ontario Heritage Act, and would utilize that portion of the facility not needed for a new power plant in a manner that is (a) synergistic with a clean and environmentally responsible energy centre and (b) sensitive to the concerns and interests of the local community." They even want to take 45,000 square feet and use it as an energy interpretive centre for children. That's what they want to do. And you guys say no. You don't even want to open it. The minister doesn't even want to read it. They don't want to consult with the city of Toronto. They want to build something which is environmentally wrong. They want to build something that goes against the dream of this city, the dream that this city has had for a generation: to redevelop that waterfront to make it a place of green parks and beauty. I think the consultation really needs to take place.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments? The member for London-Fanshawe.

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the chance to stand up and speak about Bill 53, the Toronto municipal act. I know I'm not from the city of Toronto, but I get the privilege every once in a while to live about three or four days in Toronto.

I know why our government is bringing this bill forward, why we want to enhance the ability of the city of Toronto. Toronto is the heart of our province of Ontario. Toronto is one of the biggest cities not just in Ontario but maybe in the country of Canada. Also, Toronto is the economic capital for the whole nation. I think this bill came as a response to the needs of the Toronto people and also the municipal leadership in the city, which asked our government to perform, to do something about their needs. This bill responds to the needs of the great city of Toronto.

Our Premier is in constant dialogue with the mayor of Toronto. I was listening to the member from Beaches-East York when he was talking about this bill. He said that it's not enough, that it doesn't respond enough to the needs of Toronto. We know that our government is trying

to do its best to enhance the ability of that city, because if strengthened, Toronto will strengthen the whole province of Ontario.

I believe the member opposite wants to give Toronto the tools of flexibility to enhance some kinds of issues, to give them the accountability and to give them some kind of power on certain issues, like changed governance, land use planning, business regulation, fiscal issues, housing etc. I know our government is the first government in a long time to respond to the needs of the great city of Toronto.

Look at the gas tax. Our share of the gas tax will be almost \$350 million the next three years; the federal money, \$400 million; TTC, \$350 million—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): I'm always interested in hearing Mr. Prue, the former mayor of East York, talk to this Legislature about his city of Toronto, because I believe very much that his experience in the past in municipal politics brings a lot of light to the Legislature on a bill, particularly like the city of Toronto bill. So I listened very closely to him when he talked about some of the problems associated with this bill. Generally speaking, what I took from his speech today was that this is really nibbling at the corners of the problem that the city of Toronto has with regard to its finances and its governance.

Mr. Prue has stated in this Legislature before that he would have liked to have had the cities stay as they were. I could say that, perhaps, about the city of Ottawa and some parts of the city of Ottawa which would have liked to have stayed in a looser form in the region as they were before, but we can't go backwards.

The one point that I think becomes clear when he talks about the uploading and the downloading is the whole fiscal nature of that particular transaction that took place back in the late 1990s, but I think there's a real question as to whether you can pay 100% funding for a program that is administered by the municipal government, and whether you can make that particular kind of program truly accountable back to the next provincial government if you do that.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): All of us should be grateful for the participation of Michael Prue, the member for Beaches-East York, in this debate. Mr. Sterling makes reference to Mr. Prue's extensive municipal experience, and his comments around Bill 53 should be well heeded, I put to you, by members of this assembly.

On the one hand, perhaps it's not appropriate for Mr. Bradley or Mr. Hudak or myself to tell folks representing ridings in the city of Toronto how the city of Toronto should be addressed in terms of redesigning its tax capacity and its governance design. But having said that, nobody here representing the city of Toronto or cities like Ottawa has any hesitation in telling small-town Ontario, like where I come from, like Welland or Port Colborne or Wainfleet or Thorold or Pelham—you don't have any qualms about telling them how to conduct their affairs.

One thing that I found remarkable—I'm grateful to Mr. Prue for very clearly identifying the enhanced taxation powers that this government would give to the city of Toronto, including tax on entertainment and on alcoholic beverages. I was just reading, over the course of the weekend, in the dining review section in *Toronto Life*, a commentary about the little theatre strip down there. Roberto Perrone, a general manager of several restaurants, says:

"Before 9/11, half our pre-theatre business was American tourists—coachloads from Buffalo and Rochester, families here for the weekend. Then we had SARS, the war in Iraq, the stronger Canadian dollar, the price of gas, delays at the borders. We get some Europeans in the summer, but Americans aren't travelling anywhere anymore."

That's in an article by James Chatto, a dining reviewer for whom I have a great deal of regard. I've relied upon his recommendations frequently.

I want to speak more to that when I get a chance to speak to this during my 20 minutes of debate.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon (Scarborough–Rouge River): As a former member of the city of Toronto council who just left recently, I stand to speak in favour of this bill.

I attended the announcement between the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the Premier and Mayor Miller, and I have to tell you that Mayor Miller's speech was complimentary in all regards. In fact, I was taken aback when several of my former colleagues from that council were present and also supportive of the announcement.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge): All sides of council.

Mr. Balkissoon: There were members from all sides of council, as my colleague just said.

Let me say to you that one size doesn't fit all. The previous Municipal Act had some problems for the city of Toronto, basically on its size. To me, this is the start of an evolution, of a new era in respecting Toronto and allowing Toronto to manage its own business. I must also tell you that the act, the whole consultation process, started with the city of Toronto staff in a joint task force with the province's staff.

At that time, I approached Mayor Miller as a member of council and said I had several concerns and wanted input into the process. I made a submission to the city of Toronto staff, and a lot of the issues I raised were included in the discussions that went on in the province.

This bill is incorporating things that the public had raised to me as a city councillor. Many of them surrounded enforcement of property standards and inspection of private property. This bill gives the city of Toronto a lot more in enforcement rights than it had before, and the public will welcome that.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. The member for Beaches–East York, you have two minutes to reply.

1640

Mr. Prue: I'd like to thank my colleagues from London–Fanshawe, Lanark–Carleton, Niagara Centre and Scarborough–Rouge River.

The member from London–Fanshawe, I think you acknowledged in your speech, and it's something that was honourable, that perhaps it's not enough. Really, that's all I'm trying to say: There is not enough.

Where this bill has failed is not so much in the provisions that the member from Scarborough–Rouge River is talking about, because there are some minor provisions around speed humps, around enforcement, around things that municipalities generally do where they don't have to run off to the province. But the reality is that there is simply not enough money, there is not enough authority in financing and there is not enough of allowing them to go on their own.

This is the problem I have with the bill. When the bill allows a municipality to set its own structure but then has a provision right in the body of the bill that if the Legislature doesn't like it, the Legislature can do away with it—and the Legislature even has an 18-month provision: the Legislature can put it on hold for 18 months once the city—

Mr. McMeekin: I know.

Mr. Prue: It's in there, and that's wrong. My friend agrees it's in there, and it's wrong. If you believe that the city of Toronto is a mature enough municipal structure and large enough—it is Canada's largest city, and all by itself it does contain approximately one fifth or one sixth of the entire population of this province—then you have to also believe that it can run its affairs effectively and ought not to have the long arm of the province there.

They need to find the finance. I agree with the member from Lanark–Carleton that the finance, the governance and the accountability have to be found.

The member from Niagara Centre talked about tourism, and sadly, he is right. The city no longer competes in the field of tourism in the way that it once did, and that important source of revenue has been really, really reduced.

We need to find ways to help the city of Toronto. The first way is to help them find the funds to do it.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Zimmer: It's my pleasure to participate in this debate both as the MPP from Willowdale, one of the Toronto ridings, and as the chair of the Toronto caucus. This is truly landmark legislation for the province's capital city, Toronto, and it's landmark legislation for essentially two core underlying reasons: First, we are moving away from an attitude of paternalism which has governed the relationship in the past between the province of Ontario and the city of Toronto; and second, we are moving to a new relationship built on respect between the province of Ontario and the city of Toronto.

The city of Toronto is a mature order of government, some 2.5 million people. All the skills, all the talent, all the political skills, all the administrative skills are resident in the city of Toronto. They're across the street at the Toronto city hall, and the city can draw on that skill pool to administer itself within the framework of this legislation.

The fact of the matter is, notwithstanding what the members in the opposition parties have said, that our

government has received praise from various quarters throughout the city and the province for this legislation. Community leaders of all backgrounds, business and political leaders of all backgrounds and, I say to the members opposite, labour leaders, academics and a variety of local politicians have been following this file closely. They've recognized that the Premier and Minister Gerretsen, responsible for the act, have displayed leadership, vision and hard work in bringing this legislation to fruition. This legislation is going to put Toronto and our province—Toronto has a very special role to play in this regard—in a position to succeed economically, politically and socially.

The legislation is consistent with the overall approach of this government to municipal affairs. That approach is one of building partnerships with local governments wherever. This is the right way to address the challenges that all municipalities face. The municipalities and the province have to work together.

In reforming municipal affairs, our government has certainly focused on strong consultative leaderships with the municipal sector and the citizens within those sectors. This is apparent in the way we approached the implementation of this legislation. What did we do to further this consultation? A joint Ontario-city of Toronto task force spent more than a year working. They worked up a series of recommendations. The task force was composed of a broad sector of community and political leaders. They came up with some suggestions. A key part of that work was further emphasizing this concept that the province of Ontario ought to recognize the city of Toronto and, indeed, other municipalities as mature orders of government. We took into account the views of citizens from all walks of life within the province.

What we're doing in this legislation is giving the city of Toronto the tools and the flexibility to address their needs and challenges. Some of the things that we have worked on are broader authority when it comes to such areas as permissive powers to pass bylaws regarding a number of matters; accountability, with the provision of an auditor general; and in particular, and most important, I would argue, changing the government structure of the city of Toronto to better integrate the role of committees, the mayor's office and various boards of administration within the city. Land use planning, the local appeal process, business regulation, fiscal issues, raising revenues, housing controls—these are the kinds of things that we want to work with the city on, recognizing that they have the skill and the maturity and the responsibility to accept that accountability and, having accepted that accountability, to execute the delivery of the types of government that we expect to achieve that accountability.

It's for these reasons that I support this legislation. I urge all my colleagues in the Legislature to support this legislation.

I'm happy to share my remaining time with the member from Don Valley West.

The Deputy Speaker: You got that under the wire, didn't you? The member for Don Valley West.

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): It's with great pleasure that I stand to speak to this legislation. Some of you will know that when I was first elected to this House, one of the things I wanted to do was to get this issue on the radar screen. It was something that was near and dear to my heart, having been part of a thrust in the city of Toronto and an activist group that, in fact, the member for Beaches—East York was part of, fighting against the amalgamation of this city. I really believed that what had happened under the previous regime was not the right thing for the city and I believed that we needed to have legislation in this House that would start to heal the damage that had been done by the amalgamation. In fact, in October 2004 I introduced a private member's bill that pointed to and asked for some of the reforms that are included in Bill 53. I'm very happy to see those reforms there.

I think it's interesting that the member for Beaches—East York spent most of his time talking about things other than this legislation because, in essence, this legislation is something that he should be supporting. The people of Toronto understand that if the city of Toronto is going to move on from amalgamation, that back-of-the-napkin plan that Al Leach put in place when the previous government was in office, if we're going to move on from that legislation and that governance structure that was put in place, then we're going to need a different relationship with the province of Ontario.

I want to talk about what this legislation is going to do. I'm going to quote from part II section 6: "The powers of the city under this or any other Act shall be interpreted broadly so as to confer broad authority on the city to enable the city to govern its affairs as it considers appropriate and to enhance the city's ability to respond to municipal issues."

What this legislation does is put in place that broad framework. Then, complains one of the members of the opposition, it limits those powers or puts an override in place that could override something that the city would decide to do. What the legislation does is it opens up those broad permissive powers. And, yes, there is indeed an override that recognizes the constitutional relationship between the city and the province. We're not saying that we, as the provincial government, are going to disregard our constitutional responsibilities. What we are doing, as my friend from Willowdale said, is putting in place a new relationship that is not as paternalistic but is much more permissive in terms of what the city is able to do.

1650

I think the other thing that is important is that we have to recognize that people want their city councillors and their mayor to have the authority to do what is in the best interests of the city. They want their city to be configured and bodies within the city to have the powers they need to have in order to make the best decisions close to the local communities. For example, we have in the city of Toronto a large city council and community councils in four regions of the city. The city council may choose at some time to devolve to those community councils some

of the authority it currently holds. That could be a very good thing. Without this legislation in place, it's not possible for the large city council to do that. That means the large city council has to remain accountable for and make decisions on very local issues for the north part of the city, the east part of the city and the west and south parts of the city. It doesn't make much sense that speed bumps in a neighbourhood in Scarborough should be decided on by the large city council downtown. With the powers conferred on it by this legislation, the city may at some point decide to devolve some of those powers to other bodies. That's the kind of thing that I think is really important, not to mention that this legislation gives the city more control over architectural design, more control over what the city is going to look like. It changes the possibility around having an appeal body that would do some of the work the Ontario Municipal Board does at this point and puts those decisions at the local level; it allows the city to do that. Those are the kinds of things that real people in their real lives in the city want to see. We need to heal from amalgamation, and we need to move on and allow the city to grow up in its relationship to the higher orders of government.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I've listened with interest to the government members espousing the virtues of this legislation. There's no question that all municipalities are seeking greater autonomy, and without doubt each and every one of them is seeking greater taxing power. In the case of Toronto, it finds its fiscal house sadly not in order and, as such, working with this Liberal government, has determined that the taxpayers in the city of Toronto have an even greater capacity to be taxed than those in the rest of the province.

I was out with Hazel McCallion at an event in Oakville a couple of weeks ago, both of us celebrating our birthdays around the same time, and I asked her what she thought of this legislation. She said to me, "You know, I have concerns about giving to councils that much power to tax."

We had opportunities when we were the government to hear from municipalities about additional opportunities for revenue enhancement. I know that in the area of tourism this is a very sensitive issue. We've seen, for example, that in Toronto we have a destination tax, a room charge for all persons who come to Toronto. They don't have that in other communities to a large extent, and we find that the province has cut back the funding it provides to the city of Toronto for its tourism infrastructure and for its tourism marketing strategies. If giving the municipalities additional taxing power allows the province to exit from its responsibilities in certain critical areas, a concern that is being raised by Toronto council now, I think we should have some further assurances that that will not occur.

Mr. Kormos: I'm pleased to comment on the participation by two of my favourite government backbenchers, Mr. Zimmer and Ms. Wynne. I want to tell their whip that he did them and their constituents a disservice by

permitting them only half of the 20-minute slot they would have been able to share and restricting their comments to but five minutes each, give or take, instead of the 10 minutes each. They had stuff to say that was important to hear, and I, for one, will stand up for their right to say it even if their own whip won't let them do it.

But I've got to tell you that for the life of me—how giving a municipality the power to tax amusement, entertainment, beverages and theatre tickets, I presume, amongst other things, helps an industry recover. We're talking about recovery, Ms. Wynne. We've all seen it, like you—you live in Toronto—or like me—I'm merely a guest here; you've seen the devastation. You don't have to restrict it to Toronto. Down where I come from in Niagara we've had similar—incredible, eh? At the end of the day it's all about people's jobs too, the little people, people making some of the very lowest wages.

For the life of me, how you consider that a progressive move; how, quite frankly, you consider giving the city of Toronto the power to set liquor licensing hours and business hours vis-à-vis the Retail Business Holidays Act when adjoining communities—a business simply literally across the road is not going to be able to offer the same hours or the same opening times—how you consider that fairness to the business and the community literally across the road, once again, is beyond me.

I look forward to your explanations in that regard, your further comments.

Mr. Duguid: I want to thank the member for Willowdale and the member for Don Valley West for their comments in this debate. But more than that, I want to thank both of these members for the leadership they've shown on this issue. I can tell you unequivocally that we would not be here debating this bill today had it not been for the input of these two members.

The member for Willowdale, as chair of the Toronto caucus, played a very important role in this bill. The member for Don Valley West, who has a great understanding of the problems and challenges of Toronto that were brought on by amalgamation, has played a very important role in finding the right policies to bring forward within this legislation that ensure that Toronto will move forward in a very effective and progressive way. So I want to thank them for the great work they've put into this. They've really served their constituents well through this bill.

I heard the member for Burlington, Mr. Jackson, get up and talk about fear over taxes. You hear this time and time again from the Conservative members: the hand-wringing, that the people of Toronto won't be capable of making judgments as to how high a tax threshold they want. This government has every confidence in the people of Toronto. We have confidence that they will indeed be able to keep their municipal government in check and ensure that their government works within this new legislation in a responsible way.

Toronto deserves to be competitive with other cities of its size around the world. This legislation will ensure that they have the tools to be able to compete with all cities

around the world. They'll have the autonomy, they'll have access to alternative sources of revenue and they will be accountable at the same time.

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): It's my pleasure to comment today on the speeches from the member from Willowdale and the member from Don Valley West on Bill 53, An Act to revise the City of Toronto Acts, 1997. Like the member from Niagara Centre, I am surprised that they didn't take full advantage of their 20 minutes each to speak on this rather hefty bill that we have before us. I know that our caucus looks forward to getting into the details of this bill further as time allows for debate.

1700

The basic question I would ask is, has the government done its homework on this bill? I think the answer is no. There seem to be some things like the provision for a new office of an Auditor General when there is already a similar office in place in the city of Toronto for that position.

Let's be clear: The city of Toronto is a very important city, not only for the province of Ontario, but for the whole country. I think it's safe to say it's the most important city in terms of the economy and the effect it has on the whole country. But I would also like to point out that the small towns in Parry Sound–Muskoka are also very important to our area, and they face challenges, although the dollar value may not be the same as Toronto, for those small economies, like the townships of Ryerson or McDougall, or Parry Sound. When Ryerson has to build a new bridge, it's equal to their whole budget for the year for one bridge. So in that very tiny municipality, that challenge is very significant for them. I know that the dollar value in Toronto may be greater, but those small municipalities too face some very significant challenges. I know that we, as a province, need to deal with those challenges as well.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Don Valley West has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Wynne: Thank you to all the speakers who have commented on our remarks.

The permissive nature of this legislation is very important, and I think one of the things that we need to remind ourselves of is that Toronto didn't need to have more imposition of legislation that it wasn't ready for or didn't want. So the permissive nature of this legislation was very important to all of us in the Toronto caucus to make sure that the city of Toronto could grow into and choose what it wanted from the permissive powers that it had been allowed.

The other thing that I wanted to comment on is that other cities have comparable powers in terms of the taxation issue. Cities like Vancouver, Saskatoon, Regina, Halifax and Winnipeg have various authority to levy the kinds of taxes or levies that we have put forward in this legislation. So this is not a new idea, and what it does is allow Toronto to be on a level playing field with some of the other cities in the country.

Finally, I wanted to say that I really anticipate public hearings on this legislation, because I think it will be a

grand opportunity for people in Toronto to talk about the issues that are raised by this legislation. I certainly look forward to all the members in this House who are from the city of Toronto having an opinion on this legislation.

For example, the Leader of the Opposition, who is a Toronto resident and a Toronto man, was very silent during the amalgamation battles. I think it will be very interesting to see how he supports this legislation and the people of Toronto as they grow into a more mature relationship with the upper tiers of government. I think that there is no reason for any member who lives in the city of Toronto and who understands Toronto issues not to support this legislation. This is an important and a golden opportunity for the city of Toronto.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Sterling: Let me say at the outset that our leader, Mr. Tory, will be speaking certainly for more than five minutes on a very important bill like the city of Toronto bill. We would have expected each member of this Legislature from the city of Toronto to speak for at least 20 minutes on this bill as well. Surely, their city deserves that kind of response with regard to this bill.

I think a bill like this is difficult to paint in black or white. I think there are some good parts to the bill and some bad parts to the bill, but it is somewhat minimal, given the kind of talk that we heard prior to the bill and the talk that we heard on the introduction of the bill.

As a somewhat dual citizen with regard to the city of Ottawa and the city of Toronto since I have been a member of this Legislature for over 28 years now, along with my good friend Mr. Bradley—both he and I have spent a fair bit of our lives in this great city of Toronto during that period of time. I must say that my observations from afar in terms of municipal politics with regard to this city have been that when I arrived here in 1977 the streets were a little cleaner, the city was not populated by nearly the number of homeless people, and you actually could walk up and down the sidewalks without bumping into a news box every 20 or 30 feet.

I do think there have been some problems. As well, I must say that when I drive along the Gardiner Expressway to and from the airport, I wonder whether the planning of the waterfront has really been that prudent in terms of the number and size of buildings that are going along that very precious piece of real estate and how much of it has been reserved for the public at large to enjoy.

Notwithstanding that, I have talked from time to time with the media, who have not only covered Queen's Park but have covered city politics as well. I can remember not long ago talking to a member of the media who described Toronto city council as dysfunctional. I also have opinions with regard to the Ottawa city council, which I think this bill in some ways relates to because the city of Ottawa has been requesting changes, new powers, new taxing powers for themselves as well.

I do think it is proper for this government to look at how municipal governments are functioning, particularly with regard to larger bodies like the city of Ottawa and

the city of Toronto councils. In the last municipal election, in the county of Lanark, which I represent as well as the west part of the city of Ottawa, there was a considerable change in the municipal councils in the county of Lanark. It seems that in the smaller municipalities, there's a greater change in the representation that occurs there. I think that's healthy in some ways, although I saw some good friends lose their positions. It does bring to council, it does bring to the municipalities of Lanark a new vision, a new thought, a new idea in terms of the municipal representatives who are there. Unfortunately, it seems that in our large municipalities, the change in council is minimal. In other words, an incumbent has a lock on his or her particular area, and until that particular member of council decides to voluntarily retire, the representation doesn't change.

So when the Premier announced without consultation the increase from three to four years at the ROMA conference last week—that's the Rural Ontario Municipal Association—that particular announcement was not met with a lot of enthusiasm from our rural municipalities, and I can tell you why. Their particular view on this issue is that to give a four-year commitment to municipal council is, in a lot of cases, too long for them, because in the rural areas it is primarily a volunteer position. So it's very, very difficult for someone who has just retired or is close to retirement to say, "I want to give four years of my life to serve on council." Many of them do not want to give that kind of commitment. One councillor from Almonte told me that if it did go to four years, he probably wouldn't stand for re-election in the next municipal election.

There is a side of this that I wish and hope that when this bill is brought in, municipalities will be able to decide whether they want to go for a three- or four-year term. In other words, it will be optional for the present council to do that, because it's not universal with regard to the choice of going that way.

1710

I want to bring to light what has happened in Ottawa. When Ottawa heard that some new powers were going to be given to the city of Toronto, the city of Ottawa brought forward a recommendation in July. I think it's interesting to know how wide and far our city wanted to go with regard to their powers and what they were seeking, and then perhaps we should compare them to what, in fact, was given to the city of Toronto. The city of Ottawa wanted to raise much, much more money in taxing and get more taxing powers than what was given to Toronto in this case. I'm trying to find the article, Mr. Speaker. I'm having a little difficulty doing that.

Basically, one of the taxing powers that they sought was an ability to tax land transfers within the city of Ottawa and raise as much as \$900 on the sale of a \$300,000 property. They wanted, as well, to charge a \$25 licence plate surcharge on a motor vehicle. They wanted the power to enter, without warrant, any business that was licensed by the municipality. They wanted a hotel tax which would have raised \$7 million for the city of Ottawa. They wanted other taxing powers as well.

When the report was produced for the city of Ottawa, I think it's fair to say that all hell broke loose. The business community, the radio shows, the newspapers all said that higher taxes—we're all one taxpayer, and the province should not give these additional taxing powers to the city of Ottawa. Mr. McGuinty has heeded that political warning and told the city of Ottawa that in spite of the fact that the city of Toronto is going to be getting these additional taxing powers, the city of Ottawa shall not.

We heard previous speakers talk about what the new taxing powers would in fact give to the city of Toronto. It would give them about a \$50-million possibility with regard to taxes on entertainment, alcohol and cigarettes. My prediction is that the city of Toronto will not tax any one of these three.

When Mr. Prue and I were in Scotland this summer looking at the electoral process for the Scottish national Parliament, we got into a significant discussion with the parliamentarians in Scotland about their taxing powers. When Westminster delegated the powers that they had held for 300 years to the Scottish Parliament, they gave them very limited taxing power. They give them the right to tax 3% on the income of the people in Scotland. They've been in Parliament now for seven or eight years, I believe, and the Scottish Parliament has chosen not to tax one cent under their own auspices. They receive a cheque from Westminster, and they allocate and spend that money in Scotland.

I suggest that we're going to have a like situation here. If you give the city of Toronto only \$50 million, and I say "only \$50 million" in the context that they have a \$500-million shortfall—it's unlikely that municipal councillors will want to attract the heat associated with raising the \$50 million when they have a \$500-million problem. I think they will choose to come, hat in hand, back to the province and say, "We're short \$500 million." They won't tax for \$50 million and come, hat in hand, and say, "We're short \$450 million." I think that will be the politics of the situation that will arise with regard to this bill.

Notwithstanding that I hear the Toronto members from the Liberal backbench heralding this as a great new revenue source for the city of Toronto, I suspect that we're not going to see those taxes come forward within the city of Toronto. One of the reasons was outlined by my friend from Welland, and that is, how are you going to tax alcohol on one side of the road and not on the other side of the road? You're going to have inequities with regard to where people buy their cigarettes or their alcohol or where they go for their entertainment. It's just going to go back to the same old problem we had in this province that I thought we did away with when we brought in the law with regard to banning smoking in all restaurants across Ontario, which I think makes sense in the long term.

The other part of this bill which I think is a little misleading is the fact that they're going to set up in legislation an Auditor General's office. The city of Toronto has been very progressive in that regard and has set up its

own Auditor General department. Under their structure, the Auditor General carries out value-for-money audits. That's where the auditor goes in, looks at a program and says, "Are the taxpayers getting their value out of this particular program?"

I only wish that the city of Ottawa would do the same. If in fact the city of Ottawa does not do that in the future, I suggest that I would support a bill from the Minister of Municipal Affairs, or I would bring forward a bill, that would enforce an Auditor General with value-for-money auditing ability. I think it's important for large municipalities to have that kind of check with regard to the expenditures of the city. We have had problems in the city of Ottawa. We had \$4 million or \$5 million being spent on credit cards without any kind of proper control. I think that's where an auditor, who is reporting in public on whether or not good business practices are being used, identifies that there's waste and requires remedial action.

We also had a very significant problem with Ottawa Hydro, where the mayor sat on the board and the board was awarding its own board members consulting contracts of considerable value, including the chair of the board at that time. We need to have a check on those particular matters in the city of Ottawa as well as other large and complex municipalities. Therefore, I would suggest that an Auditor General be implemented in all of those municipalities and not just the city of Toronto.

The other part that my leader identified when he responded to the introduction of this bill was the whole matter of the responsibility for different programs. When I was listening to Mr. Prue, in his remarks he talked about the split between the province and the municipality in paying for some of the social costs. He mentioned child care—73% province, 27% city; social assistance was 73%-27%, even though it was supposed to be 80%-20%.

The problem with all of those kinds of fiscal sharing responsibilities relates to the fact that the cities are administering these programs. Notwithstanding the fact that we all have a great deal of empathy for those people requiring social assistance, we also have to operate within budgets. Therefore, if we give the city the right to administer and make decisions with regard to spending, the spending envelope cannot be paid 100% by the province handing, in essence, a blank cheque to the municipalities without some kind of fiscal responsibility coming back the other way.

1720

We have seen, in terms of ambulance, where municipalities have chosen, in some cases—well, they have chosen unilaterally to improve response times, which everybody is in favour of, but nobody's in favour of paying for that particular service. There has to be a balance by those who are deciding on whether a service like ambulance, fire, police or whatever is going to be more responsive, is going to spend more money—those who are making those decisions have to have some responsibility in taxing to pay for those particular services.

My leader, when he was talking about these particular issues, talked about who is doing what with regard to making decisions and taking responsibility. He also talked about the other big problem that this bill does not address, and that is that we're not talking about a \$50-million shortfall, which this bill might address with regard to the taxing powers. We're talking about a \$500-million problem, and therefore this bill, while having some positive aspects to it, is minimal at best.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Prue: I listened intently to the member from Lanark-Carleton. He makes a number of very good points. The first is that this bill, of course, is restricted to the city of Toronto. I have said from the beginning, and I think many members of this House have agreed, that in the long term it cannot be limited only to the city of Toronto. We have 480 municipalities, more or less, in this province and eight or 10 of them are very large. I would like at a minimum for the eight or 10 very large ones to have much the same powers that are going to be conferred on the city of Toronto. I would include in that group, of course, Ottawa, Hamilton, London, Mississauga and perhaps Brampton. There are a number of very large—

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): Owen Sound.

Mr. Prue: And perhaps Owen Sound—you never know how far—but the eight or 10 biggest ones should be the first ones to get these additional powers as well.

Second, I agree with him that it is unlikely, in the short term at least, that the city of Toronto will attempt to use its taxing powers for the \$50 million. They would be afraid of losing restaurants. They would be afraid of people going across the border into Pickering, Vaughan or Mississauga to buy cigarettes or alcohol and/or to seek entertainment elsewhere. There would be a very large push against them exercising that power.

Last but not least, he talked about the administration, and it is here where I would diverge somewhat. The administration cost for most of these programs is under 10%. If the city is going to continue to administer or be told to administer as part of their contribution, then surely it does not have to reach the heights or levels of money at which it now is. If something can be sawed off, if something can be shown that the city could do for under 10% and wants to keep that power, I would leave it, or else the province also has the opportunity of purchase of service, to ask the city to continue to do it because it's at the local level and purchase that service from the city as part of the negotiation.

Mr. Tony C. Wong (Markham): I'd also like to speak to this bill. I think the member from Lanark-Carleton has raised a number of interesting points. With respect to the fact that this only relates to the city of Toronto, there are certainly many features that would be applicable to other municipalities, including Markham. The member from Beaches-East York mentioned London and, I thought, Owen Sound as well. Markham certainly would like to have some of those powers in

dealing with the problems that we need to deal with. As a former member of Markham council, I'm sure they would appreciate receiving the tools and certain flexibility. But the fact of the matter is that we will be looking at the Municipal Act. The fact that some of these features and powers are included in the Toronto act does not exclude the possibility that some of them might be considered when the Municipal Act is looked at.

With respect to the four-year term that the member from Lanark–Carleton talked about, I think there are certainly individuals who do not want to run for four-year terms. But again, as a former municipal councillor, in my opinion and from people I've spoken to, in the overwhelming majority, members of council and people who would like to run for council would like to have a much longer period so that they can plan things out and implement things in a better way. We are not looking for 100% consensus; it's not unanimous support in that regard. That is why we need to make sure that the people who would like to make the longer commitments will make that commitment.

With respect to responsibility, certainly as a 905-area member—and I can't speak for the city of Toronto—we need Toronto to have the flexibility and tools to deal with their own problems so that we can avoid and try not to deal with the pooling that requires—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Can I have as much time as him, Mr. Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker: You can have as much time as I allow you, yes.

Mr. Dunlop: I'm pleased to comment on the member from Lanark–Carleton's comments. He certainly has seen a lot of different changes in legislation around this place. I can tell you that, as a member from a fairly rural riding, I haven't had any of my constituents come forward supporting a city of Toronto act, particularly the taxing powers portion of it.

I do want to let you know, and I think it's safe to put it on the record, that I've had letters brought forth by my constituents who are members of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. The business community is very concerned that other municipalities will follow the city of Toronto act, and they will want to have additional taxing powers. That is something we've already heard in this room; just in a few minutes, we've heard Markham, Owen Sound, Toronto and Ottawa. So we already know that if there are any special privileges set in the legislation that the city of Toronto receives, every other municipality—it doesn't matter whether it's a little township or a great big city—will want the same privileges. That is one of the reasons the CFIB is very concerned, because they do think that some municipalities will take advantage of this.

On top of that, I also wanted to let you know that the Ontario Real Estate Association is very concerned about some of the licensing that may take place under this act. I look forward to the committee hearings and listening to

what these folks have to say at committee. I think it's safe to say that they are very concerned about municipalities taking advantage of additional taxing powers.

Mr. Kormos: I'm pleased to have listened carefully to the commentary by Mr. Sterling, the member from Lanark–Carleton. As I listened to the critique of the bill, whether it's from Michael Prue, from Norm Sterling or from others, I've learned very, very clearly what this bill does not do, and that is that it doesn't do anything to address the fiscal shortfall in the city of Toronto of \$500 million a year flowing to them as a result of provincially mandated responsibilities. Just as this Bill 53 doesn't address that fiscal shortfall in the city of Toronto, it doesn't do anything, it doesn't even contemplate, it doesn't even consider, the incredible difficulty that small- and smaller-town Ontario is having, dealing with a rapidly eroding industrial tax base and dealing with an aging population. When I speak to this bill in a few minutes' time, I want to ask folks to pay special heed to the impact that some of these policies have on an aging population where incomes become fixed or reduced. It does nothing to address the rotting infrastructure in older small-town Ontario. I say, then, that notwithstanding the government caucus cheerleaders who are going to call this bill the greatest thing since buttered popcorn—

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): We didn't say that.

Mr. Kormos: Okay. I withdraw. Nobody said it was the greatest thing since buttered popcorn, but the implication clearly was that it was the finest thing since sliced bread.

I say the bill does far less than any of its government advocates would have us believe and I say the bill does nothing to address a fundamental issue, and that is of the fiscal shortfall, never mind Toronto's, but the rest of Ontario's as well.

1730

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Lanark–Carleton has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Sterling: I'd like to clarify one point with regard to the city of Ottawa. We do have an auditor general, who was just appointed last July, who has not reported yet. That did emanate out of the fiasco we had with regard to some city finances. I do feel that all large cities should have an auditor general with value-for-money auditing ability. So I look forward to the auditor general's first report on the city of Ottawa.

I appreciate the comments made by each and every member. I see some positives in the bill, but I think the overall emphasis of my remarks and the remarks that I'm hearing is that this is a minimalist bill. I think the people of the city of Toronto and the municipalities in general need a greater restructuring than is put forward in the city of Toronto act.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr. Kormos: I have but 20 minutes to speak to Bill 53. I want to thank people in advance for their patience with me and for their understanding that as a person who feels grateful to be a guest in the city of Toronto, I come

from, like so many others here, not only smaller-town Ontario but old, industrial, smaller-town Ontario. I come from communities like Welland, Thorold, Pelham, Port Colborne, Wainfleet, St. Catharines and Merritton, which have lost an incredible amount of industrial tax base. You've got to understand that one factory shutdown in a community the size of Port Colborne or Thorold puts a huge dent in the revenue of that municipality, and please, you've also got to understand—that's why I made reference to older, industrial, small-town Ontario—where factories, when they do shut down, whether it's old forges or old castings operations, leave behind brownfields, the most polite way to describe land that has been soaked with PCBs and so many other chemicals over the course of years of industrial manufacturing. You see, we don't have the luxury of high property values.

I remember reading an article in Maclean's—some of you did too—around a year, year and a half ago, that talked about brownfields recovery projects across Canada, in cities like Toronto, Winnipeg etc., where the value of the land inherently was sufficiently high that the private sector, the developers, could afford to remediate—is that the word?—this land so that it could be developed on.

But down where I come from, inner-city property values just aren't that high that cities can do this work by themselves. Certainly, the private sector isn't about to do it because the property value isn't there to make it profitable. So when I sit here and listen to the very skilled critique and analysis of this bill by people like Michael Prue and Norm Sterling, and when I understand increasingly, as I listen to them and refer back to the bill and listen more to them and refer back to the bill again, that the real issue here is what this bill doesn't do for Toronto, it then forces me, compels me, to reflect on the state in which this government has left most of Ontario, smaller-town, older, industrial Ontario. When I say "aging populations"—and we are—down where I come from in Niagara region, we've got one of the older populations in the province, in the country. It's those baby boomers, of which more than a few of us are members. These are people who are in the course of retiring and assuming fixed incomes. In the case of Atlas Steel and Slater Steel employees, they're people who are into forced retirement, who had little choice about whether or not they were going to keep working, and found pension plans that were less than adequately funded. I've got to tell you that the mayors and the city councils in those communities do outstanding jobs of juggling some pretty scarce resources and some pretty minimal revenues, trying to maintain basic and core services.

The pressure on communities that are increasingly getting older, with increasingly senior populations, increasingly with fixed and lower incomes, is even greater than it is, I suppose, in those areas in the 905 ring around the city of Toronto, where the huge growth is and where the huge development is.

One of the realities about Dalton McGuinty's province of Ontario is that as a consequence of the responsibility

for funding provincially mandated programs being down-loaded on to municipalities, Ontario has the highest municipal property taxes in the country. Do you remember Peter Finch in the movie, standing at the window: "I'm mad as hell and not going to take it anymore"? Well, taxpayers are saying that as we speak.

The folks I know want to pay their fair share. They know there's no such thing as a free lunch or free ride. They know you've got to pay for things. But what they're saying, and increasingly so, is that there is just no more to get. You can only squeeze that lemon so much. There's no more juice.

This winter, boy, we've been blessed with an extraordinarily warm winter, especially down here in southern Ontario. The increased electricity prices—yet to go up one more time after the OEB does its work next month—rocked households, and that's without the coldest of winters that would have forced those electricity and heating prices even higher. You throw in a good dose of the increased cost of natural gas and property tax increases that municipalities are working incredibly hard to avoid but that are inevitable, and you've got property taxpayers out there—good folks, hard-working people, people who have worked hard all their lives, people who care about their communities and about their neighbours, people who are prepared to pay their fair share—who simply say, "There's no more left. You can't squeeze any more out of me."

I know that other members of this assembly have had the same types of seniors coming into their offices as have been coming into mine, who talk to me, at the ages of 75, 80 and 85, about their fear that they can no longer afford to live in their own homes; homes that are paid for, as often as not, at least twice if they put kids through university. What a crime, Mr. Prue, for a senior couple in their 80s, who have worked so hard, done without so much, to then, at that point in their life, reflect on the fact—and we're not talking about folks who overbought when they bought houses. We're talking about people who live modestly, but who say they can't afford to live in their own homes.

The highest municipal property taxes in the country, right here in Ontario: Ontario is the only province in Canada where municipal property taxes are used to subsidize provincial health and social service programs like social assistance, employment services, disability benefits, drug benefits, social housing, child care, homes for the aged, public health and ambulance services. Ontario is the only province that forces municipal property taxpayers to subsidize these provincial programs.

1740

People have been rocked by the arbitrariness of property assessment since the privatization and de-staffing of property assessment offices. People have been rocked by that. I know many of these property assessors, and I know them to be good people who respond as promptly as they can to requests for reconsideration and appeals and so on. The fact is that not only are people being faced with higher and higher property taxes, but

they're being faced with more and more unfair property tax increases.

Let's take a look at some of the figures. In addition to the \$6.1 billion in education costs that the property taxpayer pays, municipalities, through property taxes, pay for a total of around \$3.2 billion in provincially mandated programs: social assistance, ODSP, Ontario Works, drug programs—I already talked about this—social housing, ambulance, public health, child care. In the city of Toronto—Toronto members, stand up on a point of order and correct me if you've got the data to the contrary—property taxpayers pay \$700 million a year to fund programs that are provincial responsibilities.

Mr. Murdoch: It's going to go up.

Mr. Kormos: As Mr. Murdoch says, it's going to go up.

Mr. Murdoch: Higher and higher.

Mr. Kormos: "Higher and higher," Mr. Murdoch says. Again, if anybody wants to stand up and dispute Bill Murdoch's observations that the property taxes are going to go higher and higher, stand up now on a point of order and say so.

My goodness. Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals used to promise—they promised so many things—to upload downloaded provincially mandated programs. We here in the New Democratic Party believe there should be an aggressive approach to uploading these programs, starting, quite frankly, with ODSP, Ontario Works and related drug costs.

People across this province were shocked when they learned that the Dalton McGuinty Liberals were going to give the city of Toronto new taxing powers. You see, that's their solution. That's the Liberal solution: not only download the cost for provincially mandated programs onto municipalities, but download the grief in terms of having to respond to taxpayers who are fed up to here.

New taxes? During one of the brief, two-minute questions and comments, I've already made reference to the observation by restaurant manager Roberto Perrone, down on the King Street theatre and restaurant strip, who talked about how Toronto has been reeling, continues to reel, notwithstanding one Mr. Mills and some very aged Rolling Stones. As I told people at the time, hell, I could have got you Walter Ostanek for nothing, and he has won more Grammys than Mick Jagger and Keith Richards ever have.

Interjection.

Mr. Kormos: Well, it's true. Walter Ostanek has won more Grammys than Keith Richards or Mick Jagger ever has, and he would have done it for nothing.

Toronto is still reeling. According to what I've been able to read, most recently in Toronto Life, that restaurant strip—the people just aren't there. The Americans used to come in busloads from Rochester, Buffalo, but now a whole variety of factors—look, I'm not casting blame; I'm simply saying, that's the nature of the beast. One commentator says, "We're lucky to get some Europeans in the summertime."

As I say, it isn't just about the businesses; it's about the people who work in them—and work hard. Whether

it's in the restaurant business, whether it's in the hotel accommodations business—you know some of those workers. From time to time, they have occasion to drop by here at Queen's Park: a whole lot of new Canadians, a whole lot of women working incredibly hard, cleaning hotel rooms and making them ready for the next guest and hoping against hope that somebody might leave a toonie as a tip, because they're working for minimum wage or minimum wage plus 10 cents.

These are the people who are being hurt by policies that do nothing to promote tourism and, in fact, make it even harder for entrepreneurs in that hospitality/entertainment industry to draw customers. It's not just here in Toronto; it's tourism down in Niagara or tourism across the province. You will only have had to travel some of the roadways over the course of the summer—places where there would be traffic jams five years ago, it's smooth sailing now; places where you'd have to drive for mile after mile to get a motel or hotel room—again, in smaller-town Ontario, maybe places like where Mr. Murdoch comes from—

Mr. Murdoch: That's right. Meaford and Owen Sound.

Mr. Kormos: Meaford and Owen Sound, along with others—a beautiful part of the province, too. But getting motel rooms wasn't that hard this past summer—was it, Mr. Murdoch? It wasn't hard at all.

Mr. Murdoch: Nobody left. Nobody coming.

Mr. Kormos: I want to make it clear on behalf of New Democrats that this bill has got to be subjected to a thorough committee process. Mr. Prue is looking forward to extensive committee hearings, and I, for one, am looking forward to them too. For the life of me, I don't understand how restoring the checkerboarding around liquor licence hours or around the Retail Business Holidays Act—remember the last Liberal government that tried to download the Retail Business Holidays Act onto municipalities? Remember that wacky solution, or non-solution? Remember that, Mr. Prue? You remember it, Mr. Murdoch, when David Peterson didn't fare too well as a result of it: "Oh, we'll let municipalities determine on their own what shops will be able to stay open and won't be able to stay open."

Mr. Sterling already made reference to this. You can't have the city of Toronto with the power, let's say, to give extended opening hours and then the poor retailer across the road in Mississauga, Markham or Owen Sound—you can't punish those entrepreneurs, those retailers by delegating to the city of Toronto the ability to determine opening hours of licensed establishments, beer halls, taverns and so on. Either this province is going to accept its responsibility around access to alcohol or it's not. Again, I don't think that's safe or sound or well thought out. I'm prepared to listen to people who come to committee. It's going to be Mr. Prue who's going to be staffing that committee, but he'll be reporting back to the caucus.

This government has failed municipalities just incredibly.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): Oh, come on.

Mr. Kormos: No, you come on. Infrastructure is rotting in small-town Ontario. You know that every year that it decays further, the cost of repairing it is compounded as small-town Ontario loses tax base, like the industrial tax base, which used to be key to its sustainability. Not inappropriately, newer and higher standards that are related to the health and safety of drinking water—again, gosh, New Democrats have advocated for those and sought those and welcomed those. But they imposed new, extraordinary costs on rural and recreational properties in Ontario. The province has been so remarkably silent on this.

1750

So Bill 53 doesn't appear to be solving the fundamental, pocketbook, dollar-and-cent problem: taxpayers have had it up to here. It's not that they don't want to, but they can't. You've grabbed them by the ankles, turned them upside down and shaken every last nickel and dime out of them. Any effort to get more from them at this point can be characterized as nothing other than extortion.

So I'm going to remain very, very interested to see what folks in Toronto have to say about Bill 53, to see what members of the Legislative Assembly who represent Toronto ridings have to say about Bill 53, to see what mayors have to say about Bill 53, because, heck, I can hear them now, "If it's good enough for Toronto, why isn't it good enough for us?" If it's no good for Toronto, the corresponding argument applies too. So let's have this debate. Let's have it all laid out here. Let's have it all up front and no more surprises.

New Democrats want and expect this to go to committee. The government House leader is well aware of that by now. He will send that message on, I'm sure, to the people who have more authoritative control over the course of Bill 53. But I suspect those committee hearings are, in and of themselves, going to supply a wealth of new information that hopefully this government might heed.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It's always interesting to listen to the member for Niagara Centre comment on Bill 53, the changes to the City of Toronto Act. It's interesting for those members in the House who were at that famous AMO meeting in 1998, I believe.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): It was 1998.

Mr. Leal: It was 1998. My friend the former mayor of Brighton, I believe, was in the room that day. The Premier of the day came in with his entourage; it was rather large that day. Former Premier Harris was going to deliver the state of the union to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. I was at the back of the room. I think my friend the former mayor of Brighton was there. Mr. Harris got his usual standing ovation to start off with; it's something you do as a courtesy to the Premier of Ontario when he speaks. I didn't stand up that day. He announced that downloading was about to commence. It

was going to be a wonderful day for municipalities in Ontario. He went through all the steps: land ambulance, social housing, ODSP, Ontario Works—the whole kit and caboodle. At the end of the meeting everybody stood up, gave a standing ovation and said, "Alleluia. Happy days are here again. We're buying into this and we're moving forward."

There were some of us at the back of the room who didn't stand that day—my friend the mayor of Brighton and a number of us from the city of Peterborough—because we knew—we didn't have to have sophisticated computers that day; we just did a quick counting on our hands—that was going to be a bad day for municipalities, that downloading was going to erode our base and the municipal taxpayer was about to pony up big time.

Next, it was assessment. We were told by the Harris government that he would have an army of assessors to go out and look at reassessment. Well, that didn't happen either.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Leal: Oh, I could go on and on, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Murdoch: I'm sure the last speaker could go on and on because, you know, he's in the government and they haven't figured out who is running Ontario yet. Two and a half years and he's still blaming the past government. He doesn't understand what has happened in the government, that they are the government. Again, I don't know how many times we have to remind you guys you are the government. For two and a half years you haven't figured it out, but maybe some day you will.

Now we'll talk about the bill that we're actually discussing, Mr. Speaker, which you might want to remind some of the Liberals of. Anyway, this bill is going to give Toronto more taxing powers. I guess this will help to save one of those promises, "I will not raise your taxes," because you'll tell Toronto, "You can go ahead and raise the taxes. I'm not going to do it anymore. I've already done it enough. I don't want to do it anymore." Then what happens? Do other municipalities get this offer? We're not sure, but I think they're going to look at this.

Surely it will go out for comment. I never would have thought this bill would not have done that. I see that my good friend Mr. Kormos is a bit concerned, but I also know that the House leader of the Liberals, the member from St. Catharines, is an honourable person and he will make sure that this does go out. I wouldn't even have to think about it, if you look at who that person is. Mr. Bradley is fair and honourable. He will see this bill does get out for comment. I'm quite sure he will. He's been around and he's figured out that they're in the government. It's too bad some of the rest of them in the party haven't figured that out. Every time they get a chance to talk, they talk about the old days. Well, they're gone, boys and girls. You're in the government; you've got to start to take control.

I can understand when you say, "We've raised the taxes enough. We'll let Toronto raise its own taxes."

That's all this is about, that they are done raising taxes; they're going to let Toronto raise its own.

Mr. Prue: I listened intently to the member from Niagara Centre, as I always do, because not only does he always bring new facts to the table but he can be humorous at the same time.

He talked, though, about three very important economic arguments. They're all important, not only to the city of Toronto but to virtually every town and municipality in Ontario. The first was the loss of the industrial base. You cannot underestimate how much that means to a small town in Niagara Centre: Welland, Thorold, Pelham or any of them. That means an awful lot. It as well means a lot to every single municipality, even a large one like Toronto. The industrial and commercial base in Toronto has been declining for a number of years due to the brownfields, due in part to the older buildings and the congestion, and due to the fact that the land is cheaper in the 905 areas. Much of the industrial base that used to sustain the city of Toronto is gone. Quite frankly, there are more people but there are fewer large taxpayers.

He talked about the highest municipal taxes in Canada. It is true: Toronto has the highest municipal taxes in Ontario. But what people don't realize is that, with the exception of Great Britain, we also have the second-highest municipal taxes, that I've been able to find, in the world. The reason is in large part because of the downloading, because we are not paying for municipal services. Places like the United States have state and federal grants that flow to their cities—if you see the genius of what is happening in places like Boston, where they're rediscovering their past and remaking the city; or Cleveland, which was once a city that no one wanted to go to and is now starting to look pretty nice; even New York; even New Orleans after Katrina. They're spending the money on their municipalities; we are not.

He rightly talked about the \$700 million that Toronto would be free of if the downloads were removed. That's what we need to see in conjunction with this bill. This bill standing alone does not do it. We have to see the money as well.

Mr. Balkissoon: I sat here and heard the member from Lanark—Carleton talk about the three-year term and the four-year term of councillors. He was saying it's good to have new blood once in a while.

I just wanted to comment on that, because in the first year in the term of a council, the new members are just getting their feet wet in a big city like Toronto. The second year is when they start planning. In the third year they start campaigning. Think about running a big city like Toronto and having to plan for it, and all you have is one year in your term.

So I would tell you, as a former member of the city of Toronto council—I know many of my colleagues will accept a four-year term. You need it to run a better government; you need it to run a bigger government.

Let me clear up something about this bill that I think is important to the public. Land use planning decisions,

now committee of adjustment decisions, will be made locally and appealed locally. That has been a big headache for neighbourhoods over time, and I think they're going to welcome this change that this bill brings about.

Also, as a former member of the MTHA board—I was appointed by the previous Conservative government to serve on that board. We wanted to demolish Regent Park and we couldn't do it because the province wouldn't agree. Now the city of Toronto is doing it because this government agreed. In the future, when they want to do other housing projects, the city can do them on its own. It's not going to be held to ransom by the province. I think what this government is doing is giving the city what it needs: the tools to do its job. It's recognizing the city as a mature government and allowing it to represent the people who live within that city.

Change always comes with a little bit of people hesitant to accept change. Change always comes with a little bit of pain, but through evolution you make it perfect. I think what this bill will eventually do for the city of Toronto is allow it to do a good job.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Niagara Centre, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Kormos: I express my gratitude towards the people in this chamber and their patience this afternoon.

I'm so pleased that Donna-Lynn McCallum is here in the members' gallery again. She brought some photographs she had taken at an event I was recently at. She's a frequent guest here. She knows Toronto. She knows what it means to work hard, she knows what it means to want to be able to pay your fair share and, indeed, to make sacrifices to make sure that you do it. She also knows what it means to have had it up to here, to have been squeezed so thoroughly that there's no juice left.

Mr. Prue's observation about Canada's ranking internationally in terms of municipal property taxes is shocking and should be a veritable call to arms. Property taxes are an extremely regressive form of taxation. They have no consideration for what the income of a person is, what their ability to pay is. You should not be funding provincially mandated programs like ODSP and social assistance and ambulance with property tax revenues. It's as simple as that. Ms. McCallum knows that.

As a matter of fact, I took a look at the photos. They were from Peter Tabuns's nomination meeting the other night in Toronto—Danforth. I'm not going to tell the voters of Toronto—Danforth how to vote; they'll figure that out for themselves. But let me tell you that I was one proud person to be at that nomination meeting. Peter Tabuns is a very experienced municipal politician who will be advocating for the right things of the folks of Toronto, for fairness for taxpayers. I was proud to be with Peter Tabuns in Toronto—Danforth the other night and was so happy that Donna-Lynn McCallum was able to document it.

Thank you kindly.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1803.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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No. 44B

N° 44B

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 27 February 2006

Lundi 27 février 2006

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Président
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 27 February 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 27 février 2006

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENERGY CONSERVATION RESPONSIBILITY ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ EN MATIÈRE DE CONSERVATION DE L'ÉNERGIE

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 23, 2006, on the motion for third reading of Bill 21, An Act to enact the Energy Conservation Leadership Act, 2005 and to amend the Electricity Act, 1998, the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and the Conservation Authorities Act / Projet de loi 21, Loi édictant la Loi de 2006 sur le leadership en matière de conservation de l'énergie et apportant des modifications à la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité, à la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et à la Loi sur les offices de protection de la nature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Further debate?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): I'm just going to speak very briefly on this bill. I think everyone in this Legislature is in favour of conservation and conservation matters and, actually, measures and steps which would lead to conservation.

This particular bill, however, deals with smart meters in individual residences, and the real problem that many of my colleagues and I are having is that this is a huge program which would require the installation, for instance, in the city of Toronto of 4,000 of these meters each week for the next I think 15 years in order for them to be put into individual homes.

The other interesting part of this is that it's not an optional program. In other words, the individual does not have a choice of saying, "I want a meter," or "I don't want a meter." It's obligatory. Therefore, the power distributor is going to come into the home and say, "You must take this meter; you must swallow costs between \$800 and \$1,000 in your electricity bill." The payback just isn't there, because the greatest savings for a resident would occur somewhere between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m. the next morning. Most of us who are working do not have the choice of doing our washing or cooking or doing any-

thing consuming electricity during that period of time. So while I support, and we support, the use of smart meters for multi-residential units, I have a great deal of difficulty supporting it in terms of individual units, because the savings just aren't there.

1850

In terms of multi-residential units, I'd like to inform the Legislature about a great company in the riding of Lanark-Carlton called Triacta Power Technologies. They have a smart meter called PowerHawk; this is put into multi-residential units. As Rob Brennan, the founder, explained in the Ottawa Citizen in October, when they were interviewing him about his company and the tremendous success they were having to date, that success isn't because they're installing these smart meters because some government regulated their installation. They're selling smart meters to people who own multi-residential units because then the individual apartment dweller chooses to use their power prudently, and each of the tenants is billed for the amount of power that they use.

Traditionally, in a 20-unit building, for instance, he points out that about six of the tenants use up more than half the power, and the other fourteen residents subsidize it. So, in terms of multi-residential use, it makes a lot of sense because you're playing one tenant off against the other in terms of saying, "You use more power, you pay for more power." As my colleague Mr. Yakubuski, the energy critic for our party, has pointed out, people will act judiciously when they're spending their own money.

Anyway, Mr. Brennan and his company have sold their PowerHawk to a number of different kinds of companies across Ontario, who have been able to save a significant amount of money and bring conservation to many corporations and many apartment buildings.

In summary, I wanted to say with Mr. Miller, who is sharing his time with me, that I can certainly support conservation, I can certainly support smart meters in multi-residential buildings, but smart meters in residential buildings are dumb.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): We're sharing the time.

The Acting Speaker: You're sharing your time? Okay, I'm sorry.

Mr. Miller: Yes, we're sharing the time on this debate on Bill 21. I was pleased to participate in a day of hearings on this bill in the Thunder Bay area.

Bill 21, just to quickly review—and we have had a number of days' debate on this bill—has to do with really

two things, the smart meter initiative and also energy conservation plans. I would say, on the big picture issue, energy conservation, that's really a motherhood issue; it's motherhood and apple pie. I think it's safe to say that we all support that in theory.

Let me first deal with the smart meter as part of this bill. The idea of smart meters, of course, is to lessen demand on the system by shifting the use of electricity to off-peak hours. In theory, you'll install a smart meter and you'll shift some of your consumption activities to the middle of the night and thereby get a cheaper price for electricity and save the system the peak load demands and also save the individual some money in terms of the cost because you get a cheaper rate when you use electricity in the middle of the night.

The question is, has the government done their homework on this initiative? I heard the leader of the third party up in Thunder Bay saying that this initiative is going to cost \$2 billion. Is he right?

Mr. Sterling: It sounds like the gun registry.

Mr. Miller: That's a good point the member from Lanark-Carleton brings up: "Sounds like the gun registry." Is this just another Liberal boondoggle? As I say, we all support conservation in theory, but the way this is being implemented, have they done their homework?

The federal government's long gun registry is reported to have cost over \$1 billion. What other things do we spend \$1 billion—\$2 billion—on, if Mr. Hampton is correct, to have more benefits in the energy sector, especially when you look at the government's policy to do with energy? It's basically a supply-and-demand system. Right now, the government is going ahead with blinders on, planning on shutting down coal-fired generation—25% of the production of electricity. And it's supply and demand, so if you take 25% of the supply away, what do you think is going to happen to the price of electricity? I certainly heard that up in Thunder Bay and Atikokan.

I was at the forestry announcement made by the government last week, which I supported. In fact, many times I asked, in this Legislature, the Minister of Natural Resources to follow the recommendations specifically of his council on forest sector competitiveness and to implement the recommendation of that council, which asked for the government to assume 100% of the cost of primary roads and 50% of the cost of secondary roads. I was pleased to see the government finally, after many times being asked to implement that—I would just say, what took them so long? In the north we've been seeing mills close and forestry jobs going week by week. In fact, there was another one announced—Columbia Forest Products—last week, the day before they made their announcement—another 100 jobs because of a layoff.

Last week I think the forestry sector was generally very pleased, as I was pleased, to see the announcement. However, I was going around the room, talking to them, and they said, "The next problem we have to deal with is energy." The cost of energy in the north is costing jobs big time. I sat in on the Ontario Forest Industry Asso-

ciation meeting. They were talking about the prescriptive nature of all the forestry regulations. There was a speaker there from BC who talked about how they've just gone through four years of terrific change in the BC situation, going to more of a market-driven model, and how they had the BC forest code, I think it was called, that was costing \$15 per cubic metre to get the fibre out of the bush, more because of this prescriptive code. They're working towards more of a results-oriented code.

I would say, with Bill 21, the thing that worries me is that I see that sort of prescriptive nature to it. I hear every day about businesses working under very prescriptive regulations. I had a constituent running a sawmill—not in my riding but from the Timmins area—calling me last week about the very prescriptive nature of the Ministry of Labour regulations that they're working under and how the government isn't helping. They're policing; they aren't helping industry. They aren't working with industry. They're acting like they're the police. I think we need to change the culture of government. We need to get government working with industry. Sure, we want to have safe places and we don't want to pollute, we want to do the right things, but we also have to make sure we have industry left to survive. We need to get government, whether it's the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Labour or the Ministry of Energy, working with municipalities.

When I was up in Thunder Bay, I heard from the municipality of Atikokan, and I come back to the question, does this make sense, having to do with smart meters? We're hearing varying estimates as to the cost, but we've heard estimates that it might cost as much as \$8 a month on the individual residential household electrical bill to pay for the smart meter, and the government, as I understand it, is requiring them as mandatory in all residences. If you're using a small amount of electricity—we had a guy here recently who had a \$13 electrical bill. His electrical bill is going to just about double because he gets a smart meter, no matter what he does. So that's not going to make a lot of sense.

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I personally feel that they should be optional. We had Atikokan Hydro coming before the committee up in Thunder Bay giving the example of a situation where they had a rural area, and I'll read right from their presentation. They said, "A case in point is we have one distribution area that has a substation and six customers, three of whom are seasonal. It would take a 400-foot tower to do a wireless interrogation of these meters. Landlines will require significant upgrades. This is going to be a different cost and perhaps will need a different approach than in a more populous subdivision."

They go on to estimate the cost of smart meters: "My estimate would put the cost at closer to \$1,000 per meter by the time the dust settles. We have 1,700 customers. So the cost will vary from \$340,000"—they used a couple of different estimates—"to \$1.7 million," or up to a possible 80% of the cost of their whole existing plant of that local delivery company in Atikokan.

So there are going to be cases where it just doesn't pay for the individual and it can be very expensive, especially in northern and rural areas. So I do have a lot of questions to do with whether the government has really done their research on this. With the high energy prices we're seeing, perhaps the government's plan is to stimulate the forestry sector with all the demands in paper that will be required to do all the conservation plans that are part of this bill.

In closing, the main question I have with this bill is whether it makes sense, whether the government has done its homework in terms of the costing of these smart meters. I also have questions to do with a requirement for conservation plans that won't necessarily make any difference, other than requiring a lot of people to do a lot of reports that are not necessarily going to benefit us in any way in terms of saving electricity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I'm going to have a chance to speak to this bill in a few minutes' time, approximately eight to 10 minutes' time.

I think it's incredibly important for us to understand that there's been some pretty thorough critiquing of the bill by opposition members. At the end of the day, the bill is revealed to be little more than the proverbial window dressing. There's nothing whatsoever in this bill that provides for, supports, initiates the broad-based, extensive, deep conservation program that we know we need if we're going to address the ever-growing need for more and more electricity generation.

The government uses permissive language over and over and over again in terms of its so-called conservation effort: "The Lieutenant Government in Council may, the Lieutenant Governor in Council may, the Lieutenant Governor in Council may." There's nothing law about that. "Law" means when "you shall," and if you don't, then you've got to pay the consequence. Nothing whatsoever—nothing to create a strong and mandatory conservation program.

The smart meter, at the end of the day, ain't that smart, because it's going to cost consumers, households, hundreds of dollars per household, when in fact that same household is still going to consume the same amount of electricity. It's going to need X hours of air conditioning a day, X hours of furnace motors running, X hours of refrigerators running. There's nothing about a smart meter that tells you when to unplug the fridge, because there ain't no such thing, and the government just doesn't understand that. Talk about a bait and switch. Smart, my foot.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It's delightful for me to listen to the member from Lanark—Carleton and my colleague the member from Parry Sound. It's really interesting that the most detailed pilot study in the province of Ontario was done in Chatham-Kent with the Chatham-Kent LDC. The general manager of that LDC appeared before us when the committee visited Chatham. It's interesting that the two opposition parties push that

detailed study aside, because what did that study tell you? In 1,000 homes in Chatham, Ontario, the LDC in that area retrofitted the existing meters at an all-in cost of \$1.29. As I said last week—but I don't think anybody was listening—that study was verified by a very distinguished accounting firm, Deloitte, who went through the whole Chatham-Kent study with a fine-toothed comb to verify that the all-in cost was \$1.29.

I keep hearing this nonsense—\$7, \$8, \$9, \$10—and I hear this \$2-billion figure. I think that when you start looking at the details of that most comprehensive study done in Ontario, it sheds a lot of light on the smart metering initiative. When you look at the profiles that were shared with us that day—maybe the members were out having a coffee or whatever, but when that general manager of the LDC shared detailed information with us at committee that day, he certainly indicated to us how each individual, as part of that 1,000-home study, saved substantial amounts of electricity through the smart metering initiative because they were shifting their uses to off-peak hours. That was certainly put to them in detail.

I'm somewhat frustrated that this most detailed study seems to be ignored by the opposition parties. So I think it's important that we take the time to look at that study, because I think that has implications for smart meters across the province of Ontario.

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): It's refreshing to hear tonight that the government of the day didn't blame the opposition for this problem they've created. Maybe they're finally going to live with it.

We also heard from the member who just spoke that it's only going to cost \$1.29. Would there be any way that we could put that in the bill as an amendment? Maybe we're too late for that now, but if the government was so sure of themselves with that, maybe they'd like to add that to the bill. We could add that right in there, because there have been estimates of up to \$8 a month. What are you going to say to the person for whom it costs that? Are you going to say, "Oh, well, we thought it was \$1.29, but I guess we were misled"?

As mentioned by Mr. Miller down here, a person had \$13—something like that—for their monthly bill. If they pay \$8 for their metre, they're almost going to double their bill. This doesn't sound too smart. As the member from Welland says, it doesn't sound look a smart meter when that happens. But maybe we can get this \$1.29—I'm sure that the member who just spoke would put that in a private member's bill. He could come up with that, saying that in the future it will only be \$1.29. That would be a good private member's bill for him, and hopefully somewhere along the line he could do that.

If they talk about conservation, no one is against that. We all want to see that happen. But I was also in Atikokan not that long ago and was at the coal-fired plant. It's unbelievable what the government wants to do to them. It just doesn't make a lot of sense. And now they're coming up with these meters that are going to cost people money rather than decreasing costs.

It was nice to hear Mr. Sterling mention that he was going to do the washing and so on, but he just couldn't do it at night. So it's nice to see that he's going to do that now.

What we'll be looking for in the future is a private member's bill coming out of Liberal benches that it will only be \$1.29.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): There are three points that I'd like to make on the particular comments made by my two colleagues from the Conservative Party. On the first one, I'll pick up where my good friend Mr. Murdoch left off. I think we need an ironclad guarantee signed by Dalton McGuinty saying, "If it costs more than \$1.29, you're going to get your money back." Oops, hang on. Dalton McGuinty signing a promise? I don't think it's going to work. No, Dalton McGuinty breaks promises: "We're not worried about that." If you guys are willing to put it in the bill and put it in the law, as my good friend says, then maybe, but don't do it as an ironclad, guaranteed contract signed by Dalton McGuinty, because we've found out that doesn't mean a heck of a lot.

The other thing is that in this bill the government is giving itself the regulatory powers to require public agencies to develop energy conservation plans in accordance with criteria set out in a regulation. Well, whoop-de-do, as Ralph Kramden used to say on *The Honeymooners*. You can do that now. The government basically has the power, because it funds public agencies. So if the government says to public agencies, or to itself, "You will do X, Y or Z when it comes to energy conservation," it can do that already. Now, you've put it in the bill. Is it a bad thing? Of course not, but you can't go trumpeting as if you're doing something wonderful here, because it's something you can do already.

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On the last point on the smart meters, I just want to pick up where my good friend from Welland-Thorold left off; that is, what smart meters are really going to mean. When are the peak loads? Around supertime. So you come off the freeway, walk into your house and you want to cook yourself a steak or make yourself a bowl of soup, and you go, "Oh, I can't turn on my stove because this is a peak time. I'm going to stay up until 2 o'clock in the morning, when it's not a peak time, in order to save myself a grand total of maybe 30 cents." I say to you that it's not going to do anything toward conservation. What it's actually going to do is charge people more for electricity during peak times when they've got to use it.

The Acting Speaker: Response. The member from Parry Sound-Muskoka.

Mr. Miller: Thank you to those members who made comments.

The member from Timmins-James Bay talked about the government bragging about what they had done. I note that in the minister's speech to the committee she was taking credit for things that were done before the current government was even formed. I specifically mean

the use of deep lake water cooling technology in downtown Toronto.

I spoke to the engineer, who is from Muskoka, a number of years ago when we were the government, and he was telling me all about how it was just about finished. Yet in the minister's speech she says, "The initiatives we have undertaken to date have moved us well toward meeting these essential commitments. By undertaking energy-efficient retrofits and upgrades to government buildings and making use of deep lake water cooling technology at Queen's Park, we are well over halfway to meeting our promise." I guess that means the past government was responsible for half of the advances in meeting the energy conservation targets.

I would also like to bring up the situation of small energy users again, because I think they won't benefit. I say to the member from Peterborough that Chatham is different from most of rural Ontario, and certainly from northern Ontario, where the cost will be much more than \$1.29. I would like to see Dalton McGuinty make another promise; of course, we know what his promise is worth. It's the small electricity users and whether this is going to apply to apartments or condos. In the apartment I live in, in downtown Toronto, I have had the heat off for the whole winter, so I don't know how I'd save power. It seems to get enough heat from all the apartments around it that I have to have the window open and the heat off. I don't know how I'm going to save any money in terms of installing a smart meter. So there's going to be the small electricity users whom this just simply will not benefit.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Sterling: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: There's been some mention about me doing the laundry. I want to tell everybody here that I did a laundry load on Sunday and, worse still, I did it during a peak load time. I'm sorry.

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order, but I'm sure everyone out there understands that you are domesticated.

The member from Niagara Centre.

Mr. Kormos: This is feckless and undoubtedly ineffective; mere lip service to the cry for a sorely needed, extensive, broad-based, deep-reaching conservation program, to repeat what other observers have said over and over again.

At the end of the day, most of anyone's electricity consumption is relatively inelastic. You don't plug in and unplug the fridge; the fridge is left plugged in all the time. In the wintertime, you turn the heat down but you can't turn the heat off, because the pipes will freeze, then they'll burst and you'll have water damage, and then you've compounded your problems. If you're a senior citizen, you can't even turn the heat down, because you're home throughout the course of the day as well as in the evening. That meter spinning outside your house is not going to be particularly instructive as to when your cost of electricity will have dropped during the off-peak times.

From a conservation perspective this bill is a bust, and from the smart meter perspective is going to put additional load on consumers in terms of, they're the ones who are going to have to pay for it—end of story. To suggest that you're talking about a \$1.29 is downright silly. Just not credible, is it? Balderdash. What silliness, what horse feathers, what unadulterated and, again, erroneous, incorrect and inaccurate information to be given to an electricity-consuming public that's already been gouged over and over again. Look, the real problem is the ever-growing privatization of electricity supply and distribution here in Ontario and the fact that the profiteers are passing those costs on to electricity consumers.

I'm grateful to NDP researchers for some of the materials they put together in response to this bill, because one of the things they draw our attention to is the key report, the Pembina report in May 2004, titled *Power for the Future: Towards a Sustainable Electricity System for Ontario*. This invaluable report laid out a set of interconnected initiatives designed to wean us off both coal and nuclear power. And, you see, although schedule A of this bill is called the Energy Conservation Leadership Act, ironically it fails to lead Ontarians anywhere, never mind towards any meaningful reforms in terms of electricity conservation and energy efficiency.

The Pembina report indicated very clearly that the largest single area for potential savings in terms of electricity consumption was improvement to building shells and heating, ventilation and air conditioning in the commercial-institutional sector, with potential huge annual savings. So does the government respond? Does this bill have any amendments on the Ontario building code? No. What Ontarians need, rather than a silly bill that plays words with the language of its title like so-called smart meters, are reforms to the Ontario building code for new structures and renovations that will keep the heat inside in the winter and outside in the summer. Did Ontarians get this from this government? No.

As well, New Democrats were very clear. Howard Hampton and the NDP have been consistent and very clear in advocating reforms that Ontarians could use to upgrade the energy efficiency of their homes, programs like the Power Smart residential loan program in Manitoba. But does this bill do anything to help Ontarians upgrade the energy efficiency of their homes? No.

When it comes to making appliances more energy-efficient—fridges, stoves, water heaters and dishwashers, things like that—what does this legislation say? Absolutely nothing.

So McGuinty and the Liberals are missing in action when it comes to updating energy-efficiency standards.

There is some incredible technology available that will assist homeowners in very dramatically reducing their electricity consumption. Over and over again, Howard Hampton has been explaining to people the two biggest electricity consumers in your home: (1) your furnace motor; and (2) your refrigerator. The two largest single electricity consumers in the home are not spoken to at all by this bill, nor are they spoken to by any variation or

form of so-called smart meters, which we're increasingly becoming aware are simply not that smart.

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There would be bona fide, legitimate savings, and not just the dollar-and-cent savings, but the actual reduction of the utilization of nuclear and coal-powered generation, if this government were simply to have listened to people with history, background and expertise in conservation areas and embarked on some of those very specific programs ranging from soup to nuts. It's so obvious, even a modest or cursory overview, everything from the refenestration of your house to enhanced insulation or the support of purchasing contemporary and energy-saving appliances. It could have been done and could have had real payback, and would have not only reduced the invoice cost to the consumer and provided some real, dramatic relief, but also served our environment well by reducing the reliance upon coal-powered generation.

It remains to be seen where all of the permissive sections in the bill will lead us, because even the most generous observer is sceptical that they will take us anywhere near meaningful levels of conservation.

My concern, again, is how electricity is becoming increasingly unaffordable. Take a look at your own home electricity bills from this last winter, Speaker, notwithstanding all the best efforts on your part to reduce electricity consumption. I know you're a conscientious person in that regard; I know that. But all of your best efforts and you've still been opening up that bill at the end of the month and darn near swallowing your bubble gum when you see how expensive it's been. When you do turn the heat down during the day because there are just two folks living there and they've gone off to work and they're not home until 6, 7—look, tonight, you're not going to be home until 9 o'clock or so. Take a look, Speaker, at your electricity bill and then think about a family with four or five kids, where notwithstanding the best efforts, that back door, that side door in the middle of winter is swinging open, shut, open, shut, open, shut, where you don't have any choice about having a freezer in the basement. You've got to have a freezer because you don't feed four or five or six kids unless you buy bulk meat, packaged food. You go to the butcher, you go to Billy Murdoch and get yourself half a steer and—

Interjection.

Mr. Kormos: Well, that's how folks do it. It isn't downtown Toronto, "Oh honey, are the ice cubes ready yet for the martini shaker?" No, you need the freezer because you've got to buy the side of beef or half a pig, otherwise you don't eat much meat that season.

So I say to the Speaker, take a look at your electricity bills, where you have two adults, very conscientious about controlling the temperature in the house, turning the heat down in the morning when you head off to work, waiting until you get back home at night to turn it back on. You don't need a smart meter to tell you you don't use your washing machine at 5 in the afternoon, unless you have no options, unless you literally run out of clean clothes, but you wait until 11 at night. But if you're a

mom with four or five or six kids, you're washing clothes all day. That's the reality of it. Don't tell her about smart meters. That washing machine is going every day, three, four, five hours a day, especially when there are the little kids, before they're trained. Don't tell that mom of four or five kids about smart meters. She'll smack you upside your head if you suggest to her that she should get up at 5 in the morning to get the family off and then spend from 1 in the morning until 5 in the morning washing clothes so she can get her electricity cheaper. Come on. Don't tell the folks at the little mom-and-pop corner stores and the little delicatessens who have their chest freezers that they should somehow crank the temperature on the cooler up to 45 degrees Fahrenheit, they'll save a few dollars on the cooling. Well, come on. Nobody buys mortadella that has been stored at 45 degrees Fahrenheit. It gets pretty gamey after a few hours. So you see, smart meters are irrelevant to those small entrepreneurs. We have them in all of our communities, hard-working people.

But I'll tell you what. You help families that are cash-strapped because their property taxes have been rising, rising, rising, because electricity costs have been skyrocketing, because natural gas costs have been going right through the roof, you tell them—because they're working harder, working longer and making less because that Dalton McGuinty minimum wage increase—oh, yeah, that really threw money into the old wallet, sure. You tell them that you'll help them buy a current refrigerator that passes the ratings for electricity efficiency and then you've started to make an investment. You tell those folks that you'll help them replace the 20-year-old Whirlpool washing machine in the basement with a new energy-efficient washing machine, you support them with programs like interest-free or low-interest loans to do that and you'll have made a difference.

Let's talk about apartment buildings. You saw it as well as I did. The reality is that the installation of electronic heating is dirt cheap; the maintenance of it is sky high. That also, mind you, points to the fact that there are whole chunks of Ontario that don't have access to natural gas the way we do in southern Ontario. Sorry, the province isn't piped by Union Gas or whoever the gas supplier happens to be at that point in time, so you're left with propane or with electricity. Again, lower- and modest-income people are inevitably, if they're in condominiums or townhouses, in condominiums or townhouses that may be heated electrically because the builder kept the price down by using electric rad heaters. Well, that's where the observations about meaningful building code changes come into effect. We could do some real important stuff right off the bat that not only won't hit consumers in the pocketbook, in the wallet, but will put money into their wallet in months and years to come.

Is that what this government offers up? No, it offers up pap around so-called smart meters, and somehow suggests that some mom should be up at 2 in the morning washing clothes, even though she's got to get up at 6 in

the morning to get her kids ready for school—or to the daycare if she can find one—and then maybe get herself off to work. If she's like many moms, she can't contemplate or worry about doing the wash at 5 in the afternoon, because she's off to her second job at that time of day anyway. See, a whole lot of people don't have the luxury of the flexibility to say, "Oh, let's see, I'll wait until 2 in the morning to do that load of wash, because the electricity is cheaper and the smart meter will say so."

The real core observation here is that this government's privatization of electricity agenda has created the skyrocketing electricity prices that critics predicted from the get-go, from day one. And I suggest to you, sir, that the real debate should be about the restoration of a publicly owned and regulated, publicly controlled, non-profit hydroelectricity production, generation and distribution system. I'll bet you dollars to doughnuts right here and now that there are Tories who'd stand up and advocate for that, knowing full well the error of the privatization agenda.

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There's nothing wrong with having learned from one's errors, is there? The pursuit of privatized electricity production was a serious error. Man, that monster, once it got uncaged, was uncontrollable, untameable. It was inexhaustible and it was ever-voracious; it ate everything in its sight. That privatized electricity regime was like one of those great big asphalt peelers—you see them on the four-lane and six-lane highways—that peel off the top, and they just keep rolling along, and the steam and the smell of tar follows them for a good half-kilometre. But nothing stops them; they just keep going. You're sure it would take you a good day and a half to even get it slowed down, never mind shut down. Privatized electricity in the province of Ontario is like one of those great big asphalt-peeling machines: It just moves ahead, and more and more people suffer at the end of the day.

Look at the casualties that we've had, the jobs lost: not 1,000, not 5,000, not 50,000, but 62,000, 65,000, 66,000 in the course of a year and one month. Those were good jobs. They weren't McJobs, they were jobs in the manufacturing sector, and they were unionized jobs that had good pay for people who worked hard at good jobs. Are there new jobs to replace them? Oh yeah, minimum wage jobs, service sector jobs. When you make minimum wage, you don't pay a whole lot of taxes, do you? When you're making minimum wage, you don't buy a whole lot of the products that your family and your neighbours and the people in your community put together, manufactured and built. When you're making minimum wage, you don't take trips on spring break. When you're making minimum wage, you don't go to the car show down at Skydome because Sam's Car Lot, with the 10-year-and-older models, the ones just barely making the mechanic's safety check, that's where you do your car shopping.

This government's electricity policy has destroyed scores of thousands of jobs in this province, jobs that we may never well get back. It continues to eat away at the

pocketbooks of hard-working Ontarians, their retired parents and their children, who are losing all hope of ever getting ahead.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I like to listen to the member from Niagara Centre on this issue because he comes to this issue and he speaks from history. He makes good points; he makes some good recommendations. I remember not too long ago when I did the first demonstration in Davenport against what he speaks of: the monster of privatization. On the corner of St. Clair and Dufferin Street, the first demonstration with big signs saying, "Don't sell hydro," "No to privatization," and "No to selling hydro lands."

Applause.

Mr. Ruprecht: I'm glad that we've got his support because, at the end of the day, he will support this legislation. Yes, we hear him huff and we hear him puff, and sometimes we hear him say good things. I'm a fan of his and so are you, because we all like this theatre, we all like your points of view. But I remember, Mr. Peters Kormos, that the NDP bus rolled up when Tony Ruprecht had his demonstration against hydro privatization. The big NDP bus, Howard Hampton's bus, rolled up in front and tried to block the sidewalk. And guess who jumped out of this bus? It was Mr. Kormos, Shelley Martel and a host of reporters with their cameras flashing everywhere, saying, "What are the Liberals doing here?" That was great.

But remember this. At the end of the day we have to ask ourselves this question: Are we in favour of conserving energy or are we not? And if we are, we have to come up with certain plans of how to do it. Sure enough, we will follow some of your recommendations, but as sure as the sun will set tomorrow, we also know that we have to be in the forefront of ensuring that Ontarians will get into, and buy into, this whole idea of energy conservation because it's necessary. The whole world is looking at us because the whole world has been there before us and we are simply following suit.

Ms. Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): I want to say, in regard to this bill, to put it on the record, that the government has done its homework when it comes to being able to provide customers with tools to be able to manage their electricity. I happen to know that in Europe, in Italy, they to have smart meters in every home, and the cost of the smart meters has been paid over and over again because people do manage to use their electricity when there is a cost that is less than using it during peak hours.

We're building what I call a 21st-century approach to managing our electricity costs. It's progressive. Other jurisdictions have shown that it works. I'm proud to be part of a government that has the courage to do this and not just to sit back and say, "Just the status quo is all we want. We don't want to change anything. We just have the status quo." That isn't good enough. We have a lot we need to do so that we can help customers to conserve. It is proven when customers have in their hands an ability

to manage their electricity use and know how much it's going to cost, and also provide tools for the future when you can have small enterprises that can produce their own electricity for small farms and so on, and that's what smart meters do. I know that at the end of the day, the opposition supports this type of initiative and this type of direction.

Mr. Sterling: As you might imagine, I have some points of difference with the speaker with regard to privatization and those kinds of things, but I agree with him totally when he says that this bill is a shameless sham. It's a sham with regard to conservation. It takes no real steps towards really conserving energy.

When you talk about single-family residential homes, he's absolutely correct. He makes the same argument that our party has been making, and that is that the individual resident—the mom, the pop, the kids—doesn't have a choice. They are working hard every week. They have to go to work at 8 in the morning. They get home at 5:30 or 6. They want their dinner. They go to bed. They wake up the next morning. Mom stays home. She does the washing. She prepares the kids' lunch etc. She doesn't have any choice.

This bill is a joke with regard to smart meters in homes. The other part too, as my colleague said—Mr. Leal from Peterborough cites this wonderful project in Chatham: \$1.29 a month. Well, if that's what the government is standing on, let them put it in the bill. Let's have a \$1.29 maximum amount that a utility can charge for the installation of a smart meter and maybe we'll reconsider our position on this bill. I don't believe you for a minute. And I've got to tell you, I'm going to quote you from time to time when these meters are going in and people are getting a bill for \$8, \$9, \$10 a month, because that's dreaming—that's absolutely dreaming. This is, as my colleague from Muskoka said, a little bit like the gun registry: It's phony and it won't work.

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Mr. Bisson: I guess a couple of things, one in response to my good friend from Sarnia, who says she's proud to be a member of a government that is doing something so bold, so new, so wonderful. What are you really doing in this bill? You're giving yourself the regulatory power to tell not-for-profit agencies that you fund and yourself as a government that you can direct them to do energy efficiency projects. You can do that already. You don't need a bill to do that, so I don't know what you're getting up and down about in regard to being all that proud.

On the issue of meters, listen, you don't get it. My cab driver this morning, driving from home to the airport in Timmins, said it: "I get my hydro bill and I get my gas bill at the end of the month. They charge me so much for this, deliver to you, deliver to them, transportation, transmission." There's all kinds of stuff on their bill, and they say, "Jeez, I'm paying more for electricity now and I'm paying more for gas than I ever paid before." This whole deregulation initiative has given everybody an opportunity to come and sock it to me on my hydro bill, and

now you guys are saying, "Oh, don't worry. We're only going to put another \$1.29 minimum," as they say, with regard to yet another charge on your hydro bill. I'm like the member from Lanark, or wherever it is, in the sense that I don't believe it will only be \$1.29. If you open that box, you're creating an entity that's going to be able to install these smart meters and charge it back to the consumer. Listen, any business is not in business to lose money; they're there to make money. If they can charge eight, nine, 10 or 12 bucks, they're going to do it. It will be another charge.

My good friend from Welland-Thorold hit the nail on the head. Yes, people save electricity now because of what it costs, but the smart meters are going to force them to pay more during peak times. That's what the effect of this is going to be: You're going to have to pay more than you pay now for electricity. If you want to talk about conservation, I think there are ways of doing that. I'm not sure smart meters are the way to go.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Niagara Centre.

Mr. Kormos: I want to thank all the people who demonstrated such great patience with me. Folks should know that Jim Bradley is still here, the government House Leader, and I expect he'll be here tomorrow in the evening through to 9:30. Those are the kinds of days he works.

This bill is exactly what it is. There's not much there. It was a little bit of spin when the government was experiencing some difficult times. It was one of those efforts to try to create some good news. Those opportunities become rarer and rarer and scarcer and scarcer as this government plods along.

I join those who call upon the Liberals to put it in writing: \$1.29 a month. Not likely. I, like others, will be reminding those Liberal commentators of their Hansard record on a regular basis once people start getting the bills for these smart meters and paying through the nose.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Bisson: I have good news and bad news for the Legislature. The bad news is that I'm speaking for a bit. The good news for the people back home is that I'm speaking. I figure that's the bad and the good news. I want to say to members up front that I'm not taking 20 minutes; I'm going to take four to five minutes. That's the good news.

There were a couple of things I wanted to put on the debate because I didn't get a chance to put them in within the questions and comments section. I've made my points in regard to what I think is going to happen when—is it \$1.29 or is it \$8 a month for smart meters? At the end of the day, as I said, it's another charge on your hydro bill, so if it's \$1.29 or 10 bucks, people are going to be upset nonetheless.

I made my point when it comes to the issue of when we use electricity. The reality is that peak times are those times when people use electricity the most, and that happens to be those times that are most convenient based around their work schedules. So people are still going to

be burning electricity as they do now to cook supper and do their laundry, as the member from Welland-Thorold and others said. All we're going to end up with is that a smart meter is going to charge you more per kilowatt hour for using electricity during peak times as compared to what you pay now. So the effect of the smart meters is to quite frankly push up your hydro bill.

Here are a couple of points that I wanted to make very quickly. One of the things that I've always thought would have been an idea—and hopefully the government can take a look at this. There is a really good opportunity in the province of Ontario to look at how we're able to find ways to involve people in electricity generation on a personal level, not just on the conservation side but on the generation level. For example, at Departure Lake, part of my riding, at one time there was no electricity, so people started using both wind and photovoltaic cells to charge up electricity to put into batteries. The problem is that when you're charging electricity by those means and you don't need it, you put it into a battery—it's very inefficient and very expensive.

One of the answers is to have what they call a reversible meter. Let's say you want to invest \$10,000 in some photovoltaic cells in order to transfer sunlight to electricity. Rather than storing it in batteries, you have the ability to sell back the hydro if you don't use it yourself, the electricity that you consume, so that the meter runs backwards and gives you a credit. It seems to me that would be a smart meter. It would encourage people like me and others to say, "Maybe I'm going to purchase photovoltaic cells," or maybe a small wind turbine could be developed on a home basis that allows you to generate even 20% or 30% of your overall electricity needs. It would go a long way to reducing the overall amount of power that we need, therefore reducing the demand to build nuclear power plants, such as the government is proposing to do. That is one of the areas that I think the government should take a look at.

The other thing I wanted to say just very quickly—and my leader, Howard Hampton, has raised this and I'm not going to go on any further. There's nothing in this bill to create a program, or the government has not announced a program, to allow people to retrofit. Better windows, better insulation, better appliances—all of those are needed to reduce electricity.

Listen, at the end of the day it's this: We generate about 25,000 megawatts per day within the province of Ontario. That's our capacity. We use about 22,000 megawatts. The issue is, how much electricity do we need to generate? If we're able to lower our consumption, we don't have to spend big money to build nuclear plants and other types of plants that will cost the province a lot of money. Therefore, in my view we should put it into energy conservation. On the other side, I think we need to look at how we can involve people not in a private system but in an individual way to reduce their need for electricity because they're able to augment their own needs by other sources.

With that, I certainly hope nobody's going to do questions and comments on this speech, because I'm done. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: I still have to ask. Questions and comments?

Further debate? Seeing no further debate, the minister or the parliamentary assistant may wish—seeing neither of them, I call the question.

Mrs. Cansfield has moved second reading of Bill 21, an act concerning conservation of electricity. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Mr. Miller: It's third reading, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Is it third reading? I'm sorry. I'll do it again.

Mrs. Cansfield has moved third reading of Bill 21, an act regarding energy conservation. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: The government House leader has movement adjournment of the House. Shall the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1949.

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M^{me} Cansfield

Adoptée 2207



No. 45A

N° 45A

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

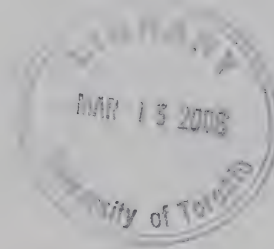
Deuxième session, 38^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 28 February 2006

Mardi 28 février 2006



Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 28 February 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 28 février 2006

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SAMANTHA BAKKER

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I want to take this opportunity to congratulate six-year-old Samantha Bakker of Woodstock, in my riding of Oxford. Samantha is receiving an Ontario Spirit Tsunami Award this afternoon. The award is to recognize her for her generous spirit and desire to help raise money for the victims of the tsunami.

It all started when Samantha was shopping with her parents. She noticed the can on the checkout counter with a big red cross on it. She asked what it was for, and her parents explained that the Canadian Red Cross was collecting money to send to Southeast Asia to help people who were hit by the tsunami. She put money in the tin and told her parents that she felt good helping out because she felt sad for these people. Samantha and her parents then discussed how they might help raise money for this very needy cause and decided that selling something Samantha created on eBay might be the answer. Six-year-old Samantha decided to draw a picture. She used her crayons to draw a picture of the world surrounded by hearts.

Bidding for her drawing quickly hit \$10,000, but when the auction closed the buyer turned out to be fake. When Toronto real estate developer Don Darroch heard what happened to Samantha, he decided to make the contribution himself and handed over a cheque.

Once again, I want to congratulate six-year-old Samantha for her kind heart and efforts to raise money for people in trouble halfway around the world. But I also want to thank Don Darroch for helping to keep Samantha's dream alive and also, at such a young age, to allow her to continue to believe that there are good people in the world who can be trusted.

IDENTITY THEFT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): Congratulations today to the Minister of Government Services, who produced a pamphlet on how to protect yourself against identity theft. Identity theft is the fastest-growing crime in North America. Confidential and private information is being stolen on a regular basis, affecting literally thousands of people. The cost of this crime exceeds billions

of dollars. Countless hours are wasted to restore one's good credit rating. Our citizens need protection.

The consumer federation of Canada has some recommendations in this regard. They say:

"(1) All consumer reports should be provided in a truncated (masked-out) form, protecting our vital private information, such as, SIN and loan account numbers.

"(2) Should a consumer reporting agency discover that there has been an unlawful disclosure of consumer information, the agency should immediately inform the affected consumer.

"(3) The consumer reporting agency shall only report credit-inquiry records resulting from actual applications for credit or increase of credit, except in a report given to the consumer.

"(4) The consumer reporting agency shall investigate disputed information within 30 days and correct, supplement or automatically delete any information found unconfirmed, incomplete or inaccurate."

I know that our ministry is following this up and will protect our consumers.

HIGHWAY 417

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): I rise today to request in the strongest way possible the support of the Ministers of Transportation and Public Infrastructure Renewal for a commitment to proceed with the extension of Highway 417 through Arnprior to Renfrew and beyond.

It was the previous Progressive Conservative government that brought the 417 to Arnprior, but that is where it has stopped. I, along with county and municipal politicians, have been asking when we can expect to see the next phase begin. The positive effects of the extension to Arnprior are already being felt. If the people and communities in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke are going to be able to develop and prosper, then the four-laning of this highway must be given top priority by this government.

It has been shown that in order for an area to attract and retain the businesses, the professionals, the services and the institutions that bring with them a rising standard of living for everyone, good infrastructure must be in place. This highway project is a must. The condition of the current Highway 17 between Arnprior and Renfrew is deteriorating rapidly as well, and must see rehabilitation soon.

Ministers, your government has repeatedly snubbed its nose at the needs of rural Ontario. Where is our share of

the gas tax? Take this opportunity to right the balance sheet a bit. In April 2004, Harrowsmith magazine named Renfrew county and the Ottawa Valley one of the 10 prettiest places to live in Canada. Build us a proper highway and let people experience this beauty for themselves.

MATTAWA GENERAL HOSPITAL

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): It's been one year, eight months and 25 days since the Mattawa General Hospital submitted its request to this government to go to tender for a new hospital, and still no reply.

It's hard to imagine a community that is in more need of a new hospital. The original hospital was built in 1902 and is used mainly as offices. Patient care is delivered in wooden portables set up in 1967, when a fire forced a temporary fix until a new facility could be built. The list of building deficiencies is long: no sprinklers, an earth-floor basement, perimeter heating only in patient rooms, an outdated electrical system, no ductwork for ventilation, etc.

Under these ridiculous circumstances, hospital staff are doing an amazing job, but they have had enough. On December 8, 2005, local ONA president Colleen Hartwick wrote to Minister Smitherman and said, "Our facilities are completely inadequate and present very serious health and safety issues. We simply cannot fathom why your government continues to allow this situation to continue for our members and the patients we serve."

On December 16, 2005, the chair of the hospital board also wrote to the health minister and said, "We wish to impress upon you the very serious patient and staff safety issues which result from continued delay in replacing the existing facilities." Ms. Pierce asked for a meeting with the minister as soon as possible to try to get rapid approval for the project. No meeting has occurred.

All the technical, architectural and engineering work for the new hospital has been done. The \$5-million local share is in place. What is needed is some \$9 million from the McGuinty Liberals and the green light to go to tender. It's time these decisions were made so that Mattawa can get the new hospital it deserves.

1340

HOMELESSNESS

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): On Sunday, February 19, I and some members of my riding association had the privilege of visiting the men's mission in London to help serve supper to residents. The men's mission provides shelter to homeless people, and when temperatures reach minus 18 with a wind chill, as they did that Sunday, homeless shelters become necessary to those without a home. I would like to thank the dedicated staff at the men's mission for their ongoing commitment to providing those who are less fortunate with a place to stay and helping them get back on their feet.

The McGuinty government has helped them through a 3% increase for homelessness programs and emergency

shelters, and in 2004-05, the province spent over \$154 million on homelessness initiatives.

Ontarians of all ages volunteer their time to a wide variety of organizations, but after the holiday season, when people get back to their daily routines, volunteering is not always top of mind. But shelters need more volunteers all year round. I urge Ontarians to volunteer some of their time to a homeless shelter or other organization that provides services to those less fortunate. If every Ontarian shared some of their time to help others, this province would be a happier, healthier and safer province for all to live in.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): Despite the McGuinty government's insistence that LHINs are all about giving local communities more control over health care, there is growing concern and fear in rural Ontario that LHINs are definitely not local and in fact will destroy rural health care.

Hospitals in Wallaceburg, Strathroy and Newbury all face serious challenges with the creation of LHINs. Indeed, tonight in Glencoe, the Friends of Four Counties Hospitals are hosting a forum entitled Take Back Your Hospital—Your Voice Makes a Difference. They are presenting five recommendations that address, as they say, the "health care crisis in Ontario's rural communities":

(1) Implement a rural hospital funding formula that guarantees the continued provision of all essential services at local rural community-based hospitals.

(2) Provide sufficient funding to keep in-patient beds in rural hospitals, ensuring that rural citizens receive care within their communities.

(3) Restore outpatient services in rural hospitals, eliminating unreasonable travel to already overburdened urban centres.

(4) Develop provincial health strategies that recognize the value of accessible health care to a rural community's economic viability.

(5) Establish integrated solutions amongst the ministries.

I urge this government to dispense with the—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

ELMDALE PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Elmdale Public School in my riding of Ottawa Centre has been named a recipient of the prestigious Ontario Spirit Tsunami Award, and will be presented this award this afternoon by the Honourable Mike Colle, Ontario Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. This outstanding recognition comes from a fundraising challenge sparked by Sam Arnold, a grade 6 student at the school who wanted to do something to help those affected by the South Asian tsunami.

The ensuing city-wide campaign, which ultimately raised over \$350,000 to support relief efforts, succeeded because Sam's challenge truly resonated with other children. Students were asked to consider giving two weeks' allowance or some money received over the holidays, or to complete additional chores at home in order to earn funds to donate.

"This award is a tribute to the caring nature of our entire school community," says Paula Roy, past chair of the Elmdale school council and key organizer of the campaign. "Not only did Elmdale's staff, students and parents contribute over \$10,000 in just a few days, but many people also brought word of the project to their workplaces, giving the drive a much broader reach. All the money raised qualified for matching funds from the federal government, so in effect, the campaign actually raised \$700,000."

This is not the first time that Elmdale has taken the lead in disaster relief fundraising. In the late 1990s, another student-inspired campaign raised over \$1,200. Then, in the 9/11 tragedy, money was raised for this event, and \$84,000 for the Heart and Stroke Foundation.

Elmdale principal Erin Linnen says, "Part of our job in educating young people is to help prepare them for the future, and learning to help others is a lifelong lesson."

So I say, on behalf of this House, kudos to everyone—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

CANADIAN BASEBALL HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): What do Fergie Jenkins, Gary Carter, Andre Dawson and even Jackie Robinson have in common? They have all been inducted into the illustrious Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in beautiful St. Marys, located in my riding of Perth–Middlesex.

Now in its 24th season, the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum originally opened in Toronto in 1982. It moved to its current idyllic location in St. Marys in 1994.

Ontario is no stranger to baseball. Ontario sluggers have over 57,000 at bats in the major leagues and compiled 14,698 hits, including 647 home runs. Our pitchers, led by Chatham's Fergie Jenkins, won 1,179 major league games and struck out 7,822 batters. We have produced major leaguers as far north as Kapuskasing's Kirk McCaskill and as far south as Windsor's Reno Bertoia.

In celebration of Ontario's rich baseball heritage, please join my co-hosts, John Yakabuski and Rosario Marchese, and me for a beer and chicken wings reception in room 230 of the Legislature from 4:30 to 7:30 tonight and be on hand for the introduction of the 2006 induction class to the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum. Confirmed celebrities for tonight's reception include hall of fame members Jim Fanning, Fergie Jenkins and Don McDougall, as well as Toronto's own Rob Butler, the last Canadian to win a World Series ring, and many, many more. Finally, I'd like to welcome Tom Valcke and Scott Crawford from the Canadian Baseball

Hall of Fame and Museum to the members' gallery. Mr. Speaker, play ball!

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward–Hastings): I rise to provide some context for the local health integration networks proposed in Bill 36. There are a lot of rumours floating around about this legislation. Some suggest that the bill serves only to create bureaucracy and privatize health care. The rumours are, to put it generously, misinformed. Their end result is to cast a shadow of fearmongering and misinformation over what is, in reality, some of the most progressive health policy ever introduced in Ontario.

LHINs are not about creating bureaucracy. Just the opposite, LHINs are about bringing health care policy to the ground level, about letting local health experts take control of local health care decisions that affect local communities. Consider this: Health is a \$33-billion budget. We, as legislators, have a duty to stop pretending we can best manage an operation that large from one head office.

In response to the other rumour, I could not be more proud of our government's commitment to public health care. In fact, our government is the first to put this commitment in writing, which we did in the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act. LHINs are just one more example of the McGuinty government's commitment to accountable, transparent public health care.

VISITORS

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): We have in the gallery today a very prominent person from the Portuguese Canadian community: Mr. Manuel De Paulos. Thank you for coming.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HEART DEFIBRILLATOR USE CIVIL LIABILITY ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ CIVILE DÉCOULANT DE L'USAGE DE DÉFIBRILLATEURS CARDIAQUES

Mr. Crozier moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 71, An Act to promote the use of automated external heart defibrillators / Projet de loi 71, Loi visant à promouvoir l'usage de défibrillateurs cardiaques externes automatiques.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may make a brief statement.

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): This bill, which I am proud to introduce today, aims to promote the use of

automated external heart defibrillators by ensuring that users of defibrillators and the owners and operators of premises in which they are installed are protected from civil liability. I hope this is a step toward saving lives in Ontario.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (BRANDON'S LAW), 2006

LOI BRANDON DE 2006 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE

Mr. Parsons moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 72, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to require that all school buses be equipped with safety crossing arms / Projet de loi 72, Loi modifiant le Code de la route pour exiger que tous les autobus scolaires soient pourvus d'une barrière de protection.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): School bus safety in this province is second to none. The record is exemplary. What we do know from statistics, though, is that the most dangerous place for a student is outside of the bus, prior to getting on or having just gotten off the bus. There is currently legislation put through by our government that I'm proud of, which requires that all new buses be equipped with crossing arms. These are arms that open up in front of the bus so that any student passing in front of the bus can be seen by the bus driver. Unfortunately, there are still a significant number of buses without these crossing arms, so this bill will require that all buses in Ontario be retrofitted with these crossing arms.

The short title of this act is, the Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Brandon's Law), 2006, in memory of a student in Trenton who was tragically run over by his own school bus.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following change be made to the ballot list of private members' public business: Mr. McMeekin and Mr. Brownell exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. McMeekin assumes ballot item 68 and Mr. Brownell assumes ballot item 25.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Tuesday, February 28, 2006, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1353 to 1358.

The Speaker: All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Balkissoon, Bas	Gravelle, Michael	Pupatello, Sandra
Bentley, Christopher	Jeffrey, Linda	Racco, Mario G.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Kular, Kuldip	Ramal, Khalil
Bradley, James J.	Levac, Dave	Ramsay, David
Bryant, Michael	Marsales, Judy	Rinaldi, Lou
Cansfield, Donna H.	Mauro, Bill	Ruprecht, Tony
Caplan, David	McMeekin, Ted	Sandals, Liz
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Smith, Monique
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Smitherman, George
Dhillon, Vic	Mitchell, Carol	Takhar, Harinder S.
Di Cocco, Caroline	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Van Bommel, Maria
Dombrowsky, Leona	Parsons, Ernie	Watson, Jim
Duguid, Brad	Patten, Richard	Wilkinson, John
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Peters, Steve	Wong, Tony C.
Fonseca, Peter	Peterson, Tim	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry	Zimmer, David

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Amott, Ted	Kormos, Peter	Scott, Laurie
Barrett, Toby	Marchese, Rosario	Sterling, Norman W.
Bisson, Gilles	Martel, Shelley	Tascona, Joseph N.
Dunlop, Garfield	Miller, Norm	Tory, John
Hardeman, Ernie	Murdoch, Bill	Wilson, Jim
Horwath, Andrea	O'Toole, John	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hudak, Tim	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Yakubski, John
Jackson, Cameron	Runciman, Robert W.	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 48; the nays are 23.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

GREENBELT

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Today I'm pleased to speak about a most important anniversary. It was one year ago today that our government announced Ontario's greenbelt plan.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I need to be able to hear the minister. There's a little bit too much chatter in here.

Minister?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: I'm pleased to speak today about a most important anniversary. It was a year ago today that our government announced Ontario's greenbelt plan. The greenbelt is a critical part of our government's plan for managing growth and building healthier communities. It is a lasting legacy for our children and future generations.

The greenbelt plan preserves natural heritage and water resource systems. It protects prime agricultural and specialty crop areas such as those found in the Holland Marsh and in the Niagara Peninsula. In fact, it provides permanent protection for approximately 1.8 million acres of environmentally sensitive and agricultural land.

When we started work on our greenbelt plan, we were determined to get it right. Our aim was to permanently protect land around the greater Golden Horseshoe, from Rice Lake in the east to the Niagara Peninsula. We wanted to safeguard land in the midst of our country's most densely populated region. Many have told us during this last year that indeed we did get it right.

The greenbelt provides an opportunity for farmers to be self-sustaining in crop production to feed Ontarians, raise livestock and grow the specialty crops that are a signature of Ontario's fine agricultural reputation. The greenbelt helps retain and create hundreds of thousands of agricultural jobs ranging from assisting farmers in their fields to technologically advanced food processing and crop research.

We have permanently protected more than 100,000 acres of the Niagara Peninsula's tender fruit and grape specialty crop area. As you know, the Niagara region is unique in its ability to produce tender fruits and grapes.

Our greenbelt plan has the additional effect of supporting the Niagara area's growth as an international tourism destination, based on its outstanding wineries and wines.

The greenbelt also provides opportunities for sport and recreation. These opportunities were expanded with the government's donation of over 500 acres of land for the establishment of the Bob Hunter Memorial Park in the greenbelt's Rouge River watershed.

It also supports the rural communities that contribute so significantly to the Golden Horseshoe's quality of life. These towns, villages and hamlets within the greenbelt provide economic, social and commercial benefits to the residents in the entire region. I'm proud that we've had the foresight to preserve and protect these unique communities.

The Greenbelt Council, chaired by Dr. Robert Elgie, has been established to provide us with expert advice on the implementation of the greenbelt. Among his many accomplishments and responsibilities, Dr. Elgie is a former MPP who held a number of cabinet posts. He was also appointed a member of the Order of Canada in 2003.

His commitment to his community and his dedication to serving Ontarians are truly remarkable.

I am also pleased to announce that the Greenbelt Council has selected Howie Herrema as its vice-chair. Mr. Herrema is very familiar with the greenbelt plan, since he is a member of the Uxbridge council and several agricultural organizations.

We are pleased to have the advice of the Greenbelt Council members, who come from a wide variety of backgrounds, truly reflecting the diverse nature of the greenbelt.

Last February, we took a major step forward with the greenbelt to protect green space, natural resources and agricultural lands in the Golden Horseshoe. It is a legacy that all of us can be most proud of. We will continue to build on it, to ensure that Ontario and Ontarians will offer a quality of life that is second to none, for generations to come.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I am pleased to rise today to mark the first anniversary of our government's greenbelt legislation. As my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has said, the greenbelt offers residents great natural beauty, provides clean air and water, and protects lands that generate some of the highest-value agricultural products in the world, creating valuable benefits for Ontarians now and into the future.

Among those benefits is the enhancement of a vibrant tourism industry based on recreation, bed and breakfasts, agri-tourism and culinary tourism.

The governing council of the United Nations environment program recently reported that tourists worldwide are increasingly looking for more attractive and unpolluted places. Tourists want to do more hiking, cycling and skiing in a natural setting. The greenbelt promotes recreation, sport and tourism with its extensive trail systems, open spaces and parklands.

Recently, I attended a Ministry of Tourism seminar, one of three that provided tourist operators an opportunity to discuss how they can benefit from increased business due to their location in the protected greenbelt area. As a result of their response, we will organize a greenbelt marketing committee to help greenbelt tourism operators reach their full potential.

I am also pleased to say that the Greenbelt Foundation has begun accepting grant applications from non-profit groups for projects that support agriculture, vibrant rural communities, tourism, recreation and environmental protection. The foundation grant program was designed after consultation with farmers, civic leaders, naturalists and community groups to make it fit their needs. I understand the foundation has budgeted \$5 million this year to support local initiatives.

The greenbelt is great news for our food security, our environment, our health and the tourism industry. It is a remarkable permanent legacy for our children and all Ontario.

REPETITIVE STRAIN INJURY

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): Today is International Repetitive Strain Injury Awareness Day. This day is recognized annually to raise awareness of ergonomic-related issues.

These types of injuries are of major concern to workers in workplaces in this province. They are, though, not the type of injuries that show up in the news, like falls off scaffolding or chemical explosions. They are common, everyday injuries like back pains and muscle strains. They are caused by repetitive, stressful or awkward movements on bones, joints and ligaments. It is precisely because these injuries are so common, so everyday, that they are of such concern.

The health and safety of Ontario workers is our number one priority. Ergonomic-related injuries account for 42% of all lost-time injuries across the province. These injuries are taking a tremendous toll, both in human and financial terms. They are the number one reason for lost-time injury claims reported by the WSIB. They result in huge direct and indirect costs to employers, estimated at a staggering \$12 billion over the past eight years, and they result in untold pain and suffering for Ontario workers.

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Our government is acting to solve the problem. We recognize that progress is being made, but there is more work to be done. One year ago today, our government marked RSI Awareness Day by forming an ergonomics advisory subcommittee to recommend ways to better protect Ontario workers. Made up of representatives from labour and management, the panel examined best practices and policies for addressing this serious cause of injury. I want to thank the representatives for their hard work and their dedication.

In September, they submitted their initial report, and we are moving forward on that report. In January, I launched the government's Pains and Strains campaign and announced that we are committed to addressing all of the Minister of Labour's specific recommendations. The campaign deals with such areas as awareness, education and prevention, as well as improved training, more resource materials, increased expertise and better tracking of ergonomic-related injuries.

Almost everyone we talked to supports education and awareness as an important first step in prevention. The Ministry of Labour and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board worked together to develop an ergonomics tip sheet. It raises awareness of the importance of ergonomics in the workplace, and it provides facts, prevention tips and links to a wealth of information.

As well, beginning in April of this year, ministry inspectors will focus on the basic risk factors during inspections of high-risk workplaces. This will happen in the industrial and health care sectors. They will distribute copies of our tip sheets to these employees. At the same time, each organization's experience with ergonomic-related injuries will be reviewed along with the preventative steps they have taken. This will help employers

identify ergonomic risks and help to prevent them. Our inspectors will encourage employers, especially small and medium-sized businesses, to connect with their safe work associations to implement inexpensive, cost-effective solutions. By doing so, we will enable these employers to take action to implement solutions.

We believe a safe workplace is a good workplace and that it just makes good business sense. Frankly, healthier workplaces make for healthier bottom lines. Here in Ontario, we are creating a corporate culture that makes workplace health and safety a top priority.

Our long-term plan, which will be carried out over the next 18 months, includes more enhanced ergonomic training for inspectors. The training will allow them to actively look for and better recognize ergonomic hazards as part of an inspection. This will ensure that if employers have not taken action, our inspectors will have the knowledge to better enforce the employer's obligation with respect to ergonomics. Ontario workers will be protected.

I am pleased to tell the members about the next phase in the government's Pains and Strains campaign to support our education and awareness focus. Today, we are launching a new section of the ministry's website, dedicated entirely to ergonomics. The website supports the Pains and Strains campaign by providing simple, straightforward information to employers and to workers. The sometimes technical nature of ergonomic-related terminology is written in plain language so that it's easy to understand by the audience.

Last week, I had the privilege of meeting once again with the ergonomics subcommittee. As part of their initial discussions, the panel was unable to agree whether or not an ergonomics regulation was necessary. They committed to going back and taking a closer look at the issue, and I now have that report. I want to thank the members of the subcommittee for their hard work and thoughtfulness. We are now in the process of reviewing that report. I will be meeting with the committee once again in March to discuss their deliberations. In the meantime, though, we plan to move forward with our plan.

We are working to end the suffering that these types of injuries create for Ontario workers. We are working to reduce the financial burden that these types of injuries create for employers. We will continue to work with our health and safety partners to provide more information and better resources. We will make sure that the necessary technical and field support are in place to support our work. Our inspectors will have the knowledge to better enforce the employer's obligation with respect to ergonomics.

If we work together, we can achieve our goal of safer workplaces in the province of Ontario. We are going to continue to move forward on fulfilling our plan to protect Ontario workers.

SMOKE ALARMS

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I rise today to speak

to the issue of new smoke alarm requirements in Ontario. Many Ontarians owe their lives to courage and exceptional bravery demonstrated by the thousands of our career and volunteer firefighters. Day in and day out, they put their lives on the line. Their superb efforts to protect us from the ravages of fire make Ontario one of the safest jurisdictions in North America. But we, as individuals, homeowners and tenants, have the means to reduce even further the risk of loss from a disastrous fire.

Experience shows that smoke alarms can give occupants the precious seconds they need to escape a fire, provided there are enough working smoke alarms in the home. It is a fact that most fatal fires occur at night when everyone is asleep. Many people are alive today because they have working smoke alarms. We need to get this message out to all Ontarians: Smoke alarms save lives.

Previously, the Ontario fire code required that smoke alarms be installed and maintained between sleeping areas and the remainder of the home. I'm pleased to announce that effective tomorrow, March 1, 2006, in addition to existing requirements, a smoke alarm must be installed on every storey of a home, including those floors that do not have a sleeping area. We have amended the Ontario fire code to make this change. We're doing this to save lives. It's just that simple.

Statistics show that there was no smoke alarm warning in approximately half of all fatal fires in Ontario over the last 10 years, and that is simply not acceptable. By having smoke alarms on every storey and outside all sleeping areas, occupants will be alerted earlier to a fire, greatly increasing their chances of getting out safely. More working smoke alarms also mean that firefighters will not have to risk their lives as often in attempting to extinguish out-of-control fires. By making smoke alarms mandatory on every storey of a home and outside sleeping areas, we can reduce the number of such tragedies in Ontario.

Municipal fire departments across Ontario are aware of the new smoke alarm requirements and will be enforcing them. They are also working very hard to increase public education efforts to encourage homeowner compliance.

Smoke alarms are inexpensive. Additional smoke alarms can be purchased for less than \$10 each. That's a small price to pay to keep our loved ones safe.

In 2005, Ontario's fire death rate was the lowest in history. The partnership between the Office of the Fire Marshal and the Ontario fire service has contributed to this continued decline in our fire statistics. The decline is also a strong indicator that the three lines of defence—fire prevention and public education, emergency response and fire code enforcement—produce results.

We hope that the new smoke alarm requirements will improve these statistics and make our communities safer. Our goal is to make sure that every home in Ontario has a working smoke alarm on every storey. This small change to the fire code will go a long way to saving more lives in Ontario. It is a reflection of our commitment to building stronger, safer communities in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Response?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm very pleased today to respond to the announcement by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Certainly our caucus, and I hope every member of this House, would agree that smoke alarms save lives. If some of the regulations have to be tightened up in the building code or in any other code, we want to make sure that that is done. It's very similar to the education we've done with the general public on things like drinking and driving, the use of airbags in cars, the safety of seatbelts and safety seats for young children. We have a responsibility, and I think it's a positive step.

If I could say one thing as we go down the road of smoke alarms, I'd like to pay special tribute to the four fire departments in the west end of my riding—the Penetanguishene, Midland, Tiny township and Tay township fire services—that came up with a very unique idea called the safe babies program. What that meant was a smoke alarm for every baby. Those four fire departments went together and made sure that for every new baby born in the Huronia District Hospital in Midland, there was a smoke detector in each and every baby's bedroom. That might be an area where we could go even one step further. As we go down that road, maybe we should have smoke alarms in every bedroom in every home in the province. These four fire services went together on this step, and I think it was a very positive step.

I wanted to also add that one of the partners in that program was the Central North Correctional Centre, which actually purchased smoke alarms for all of these families that were having new babies in the area.

I thank the minister for making this announcement today. I hope that every member of this House would be very supportive of any law that makes it better for our young children.

Mr. Speaker, while I have the floor, if I may, I have a couple down today from my riding and I'd like to point out that they're here. Jen and Andrew Hill are in the audience.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): And what does Jen do?

Mr. Dunlop: You won't believe this, everybody, but Jen is the federal NDP candidate in the riding of Simcoe North. I welcome Jen and Andrew here today.

That's all I have to say on this. We do appreciate and support stronger rules on fire safety.

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GREENBELT

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie—Lincoln): I'm pleased to respond with respect to the Greenbelt Act. I would say, with all due respect, that to bring forward a law—and the government, by their majority, can pass a law. But it takes real leadership to make it a success and to implement that law. I would point out, for example, that the Bill Davis government brought forward the Niagara Escarpment Commission Act with a plan to make it

work, and based on science. I would point out it was the Mike Harris government that brought forward the Living Legacy program based on science, with a plan and funds to make it work. It was the Ernie Eves government that brought forward the Oak Ridges moraine plan with funding and a plan to make it work. So I stand proudly on the record of Progressive Conservative governments over the last couple of decades in making green initiatives work.

What have we seen in the past year, however? I know the Minister of Tourism sent signals over to that Greenbelt Foundation to get them off their plush leather chairs in that swanky office in Yorkville, the most expensive real estate in the city of Toronto. Twenty-five million dollars has been dedicated to the Greenbelt Foundation. All that we've seen so far is a couple of million dollars that have been given for contracts to Liberal-friendly advertising firms for somewhat annoying advertisements, polling and for these swanky offices in downtown Toronto. So I'm pleased to see that the Minister of Tourism has pushed them back and they'll finally start investing in worthy projects.

I don't want to dwell on it, but let's look over the past year. Who can forget the greenbelt map that included a cemetery and a garbage dump as tender fruit land? Who can forget the greenbelt map that cut the Beverly marsh in half, but put already serviced land in Grimsby as part of the protected area? Who can forget the fundraiser at the swanky Sorbara estate, where the Premier allegedly made promises to developers on the greenbelt? Who can forget the cuts in municipal funding to greenbelt municipalities like Pelham, Grimsby, Lincoln and Niagara-on-the-Lake while their growth has been frozen? And who can forget a Minister of Municipal Affairs hounded by reporters, trying to explain the science? I think at the end of the day he did admit—I hope it was political science—the reality. This has been an inauspicious year. It's been the year of the greenbotch. Let's hope they do much better in the time ahead.

SMOKE ALARMS

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): It's interesting that the government brings forward a bill to deal with smoke detectors. I support, I think with all other members, the initiative to expand the use of those. But I remind the minister that we had two gentlemen die in a fire in the local jail in Kashechewan, where there was no fire suppression, no fire detection systems whatsoever.

I asked the minister across the way the simple question: Why is it that we have jails in the Nishnawbe-Aski region that don't have the same standards as those that are situated here or in any other community in Ontario? Why is it that a jail in Timmins or a jail in Toronto or a jail in Belleville is very clearly identified as having to have a fire suppression system and has to meet certain standards, but because those jails happen to be situated on First Nations lands, we don't have to follow any of those regulations?

So I say to the government across the way, your initiative is a good thing to bring forward, but it doesn't deal with the issues that are facing people in First Nations communities. Maybe you should start dealing with those issues so that in the future we can save some lives.

REPETITIVE STRAIN INJURY

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): To the Minister of Labour: New Democrats find it very, very strange that you would stand once again recognizing an International Repetitive Strain Injury Awareness Day; furthermore, acknowledging that ergonomic-related injuries account for 42% of all lost-time injuries, that they are the number one reason for lost-time injury claims reported to WSIB, that they result in huge costs to employers and that they result in untold pain and suffering for workers. And what do you have for those workers? You've got a website.

Let me tell you, Minister: Those workers don't need to be educated about what repetitive strain injuries do to them, their futures and their families; those workers don't have to be told what repetitive strain injuries do to them in terms of creating permanent disabilities, preventing them from ever working again in a workplace and subjecting them to a WSIB regime that causes them to live out the rest of their lives in poverty.

It is criminal that when the evidence is in, when the facts are clear, when other jurisdictions—British Columbia, Saskatchewan, European jurisdictions—have clear ergonomic regulations that have prevented these types of injuries, you would continue to drag your heels.

You talk about a committee that's divided. We know where that divide is. You chose to park yourself firmly and clearly with the bosses and ignore the workers and their injuries in the process.

This isn't a matter of any more consultation, Minister of Labour. This is a matter of providing leadership and acknowledging that the recommendations that have been made clear about the need for ergonomic regulations would in fact provide respite, some comfort and some relief for these workers, who stand to have a greater likelihood of repetitive strain injury than not.

You've been the recipient of any number of letters, hundreds of them, and I've got copies for you here. Page, come on over here. Let the Minister of Labour read these, if he hasn't read them yet: letters to you, Minister, from injured workers across this province explaining that ergonomics are very important if we're going to prevent musculoskeletal injuries from occurring among workers in Ontario.

"These strains and sprains injuries represent more than 40% of lost-time injuries" here in this province.

"Voluntary approaches to protection from musculoskeletal injury," which is what you're advocating, "have not worked. In our province, the rate of strains and sprains injuries in relation to all other workers' compensation claims has been the same over the last eight years.

"British Columbia, Saskatchewan and many European and other countries have ergonomics regulations in effect. Why shouldn't Ontario workers have the same protection?" I echo that request: Why shouldn't Ontario workers have that same protection?

"Ontario has many important occupational health and safety regulations to protect workers yet has no ergonomics regulation to protect Ontario workers. The time for an ergonomics regulation is now."

These people are pleading with you to demonstrate leadership, to demonstrate your commitment, however modest and temporary, to workers and their interests, and to implement ergonomics regulations now. The question to be put by these workers to you is, just whose back pocket are you in that prevents you from taking that action to protect these workers from those injuries?

Interruption.

The Speaker: Order. I would remind our guests that we're very happy to have you with us, but any demonstrations within the chamber are not permitted.

VISITORS

Mr. Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to take a minute to introduce to the Legislature, visiting from Thunder Bay, the home of Eric Staal—who was inexplicably left on the taxi squad in Turin—the mayor, Lynn Peterson, and the CAO, Mr. Bob Petrie.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. Over the past several months, our party has asked you and your Minister of Health fairly detailed questions about your LHINs legislation. In our last exchange, I think the people of Ontario were left with a very mistaken impression by you about the vast powers of centralization this bill gives to your minister: the power to merge and close hospitals, the power to shut down services in hospitals and the power to transfer charitable gifts—no oversight, no hearing, no nothing. Why are you spending \$160 million on another layer of bureaucracy which will essentially be rendered completely powerless by the vast new powers being given to your minister? Why are you doing that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this issue again and to help the leader of the official opposition better understand what it is that we are doing here.

Specifically with respect to the issue of ministerial powers, I think it's important for the leader as well as Ontarians to understand that those powers are not to be

exercised unless and until the minister receives advice in that direction from the local community. This represents an incredible transformation. What it does is it gives the local health integration network, that committee, unprecedented authority to have influence with respect to the delivery of health care in the community by giving advice to the minister in this regard. So the minister looks forward, as he has already done, to continuing to work with those local health integration network committees.

1430

Mr. Tory: The Premier's answer is not in accordance with the facts. If you look, for example, at section 30 of the bill with regard to charitable gifts, it says specifically that there is no consultation with anybody, not even the poor old donor who gave the money. The minister can just issue an order transferring a charitable gift to another hospital. In the case of the other things, the merging and closing of hospitals and the shutting down of services, it says that he has to get the advice of the LHINs; he doesn't have to follow it. As the leader of the third party pointed out yesterday, these are all people you put there anyway.

You brought in the largest tax hike in Ontario's history under the guise of improving health care. I had a chance to see some of this so-called improvement when I was at the Peterborough hospital. I can tell you that at the Peterborough hospital they're thinking about furniture, but they're thinking about hospital beds, not new desks for bureaucrats. Why are you wasting this health tax money on centralizing power, buying new furniture and putting together new offices for expensive bureaucrats? Why would you do that to the people of Ontario and waste their money when they're looking for hospital beds, not bureaucratic—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The question has been asked. Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I really fail to understand the leader of the official opposition's confidence in Ontario communities. What he is effectively saying throughout all of the criticism that he's levelled at our government in connection with local health integration networks is that he doesn't trust local communities to have influence for the first time in a real way when it comes to the delivery of health care in their community. We see things differently.

He would take over \$2 billion out of Ontarians' health care. We have increased funding for health care. Also, as an expression of our confidence in local communities, we're saying to those communities that we're going to put in place 14 local health integration networks, and for the first time in the history of this province, you will have a real say in how health care is delivered in your community. We think that is progressive. We think that's a step forward. And we think it finally recognizes that when it comes to health care, nobody should be more influential than Ontarians themselves.

Mr. Tory: I say to the Premier, if you really meant a word you said, you would be saying that the local people, whose advice you say you value so much, would get to make these decisions, subject to a veto by the minister,

instead of simply having the minister ask for their advice and then proceed to issue an order regardless of what they say.

On my visit to Peterborough, I made another visit. I decided to visit the LHIN responsible for Peterborough on the way back. It's in Ajax, an hour away from Peterborough. I was going to talk to them about patients lying on stretchers in the hallways of the Peterborough hospital. The doors were locked; the lights were out. All you could see through the door was all the new furniture. All the other businesses on that floor were staffed and open.

If the minister is not going to exercise these new powers to close hospitals, merge them, shut down services or transfer charitable gifts, why do you have to give him these powers if you're really trying to place that responsibility with the local people? Why does he need those powers if he's not going to use them? Why?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, so Ontarians are clear as to where we're moving on this front, overall the number of positions will in fact be reduced as a result of this local health integration network strategy.

With respect to new furniture, it is quite true that some new furniture has been acquired. But I can tell you, it's going into boardrooms where, for the very first time, decision-making will be subject to the light of day at the local level. The leader of the official opposition says, let's make those decisions in downtown Toronto in some office tower, remote and far removed from Ontarians. Again, what I think this boils down to fundamentally is that I have confidence in the people of Ontario at the community level to lend good and positive shape to the quality of health care they receive. The leader of the official opposition harkens back to a bygone era. He wants all those decisions to be made in some office tower in downtown Toronto. We see things differently.

MINISTERIAL CONDUCT

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. In the Integrity Commissioner's report on page 2, when referring to Chalmers Group you said, "I was never actually involved in this business, ever." And again, on page 17, "I had no involvement...." Yet, Minister, in Hansard on February 16, just two weeks ago, Minister Papatello told this Legislature how well she got to know you when she recruited you to be a candidate for the Liberal Party and how she had a very good window to watch you and see you. She said three times during that debate that the Chalmers Group of companies was your second home. Minister, having someone describe Chalmers as your second home doesn't jibe with your sworn statement. We also have a letter from a former Peel school board employee who says he saw you at the Chalmers Group headquarters dozens of times.

Which is it, Minister? You told the Integrity Commissioner you had no involvement, yet Minister Papatello says it was your second home and it was the empire you built. Who's telling the truth here, Minister?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): The Leader of the Opposition made some accusations to the Integrity Commissioner, and the Integrity Commissioner has ruled on that. I have said in this House that I accept his report entirely. That issue has been dealt with.

Mr. Wilson: Your campaign literature here says that you were the president and CEO of these companies. You now say that's not true. You accepted awards from the Mississauga Board of Trade, the chamber of commerce, the New Pioneer Award. Your ministry website brags about how wonderful you were at Chalmers. Now you say that's not true, that you hardly went there. Minister, here's a picture of you inside your factory, taken in 2001, and I'll send that over to you, a place you say you were, quote, "never involved in." The same article says you oversaw three additional companies. Now you say this isn't true.

Minister, when it suits you, you oversee this company. You brag about it during your campaign and you accept awards for the Chalmers Group, but the Integrity Commissioner is told an entirely different story. Can you tell us which one of the many stories you have woven is actually the truth?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: I think the party on that side is becoming desperate. Let me say this: I always said, that I had a majority shareholding in this company. I always said I held the title of president and CEO of this company—always maintained that. Every document will show that. Now they are trying to recreate what has already been dealt with by the Integrity Commissioner. I think they need to move on. I am moving on. I am proud of the work that company did when I was the president and CEO of that company, and I can take some credit for that.

Mr. Wilson: Minister, you spent a great deal of time telling the Integrity Commissioner that you really had nothing to do with that company. Why would you need a parking spot there full-time, then, if you really had nothing to do with that company and your wife ran it all? The evidence you've given the Integrity Commissioner seems to be in doubt. He's dubious about it, I'm dubious about it and I think the people of Ontario are dubious about it. You were reckless and negligent in your dealings with your company, and you're now reckless and negligent with the truth. Minister, I give you one more opportunity: Why don't you tell the people the truth in this matter? Clear your conscience, come clean with the people of Ontario, something you have yet to do in this matter.

Hon. Mr. Takhar: All these issues have been totally dealt with by the Integrity Commissioner and I accept his report entirely. That is the end from my point of view, and I'm moving on to do my job and focus on my job.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier, and it's about the Premier

who promised a more democratic Ontario but who is breaking that promise yet once again today. I'm talking about your LHINs bill, Premier. We know that people across Ontario have very serious concerns about your LHINs bill and what it will do to patient care. People across Ontario want more debate, not less. They want more discussion, not less. But instead of listening to them, you have brought in a motion to choke off debate and discussion, a guillotine motion that will shut debate down. Premier, when you were in opposition, you said cutting off debate "diminished our democratic institutions." Can you tell us what's different now?

1440

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'm pleased to take the question. I want to remind the leader of the NDP that the announcement on the part of our government concerning LHINs was first made on 6 October 2004. I have a copy of the release that was put out on that date. We have, since that time, introduced a bill. By the way, back then we announced the first in a series of ongoing bulletins to keep the stakeholders and the public informed, and we set up—and I think this is without precedent—a LHIN website so that people could always stay informed.

Beyond that, the bill was introduced; we've had five days of debate, 10 days of committee hearings, and 56 amendments were adopted, 10 from the opposition, including some from the NDP themselves. So we think we've had a very good opportunity, as have Ontarians, to thoroughly consider the implications of this legislation, and we look forward to moving ahead.

Mr. Hampton: The Premier wants to pretend that this bill has had a lot of debate. Premier, you introduced this bill on November 24. Do you remember that? That was about when the federal election was called, and all eyes were focused elsewhere. You had second reading debate during the federal election, when all eyes were focused elsewhere. You limited public hearings to only seven days on a bill that will centralize power over local health services in the hands of the Minister of Health and will allow him to order the transfer, order the shutdown, order the privatization of important health and hospital services.

Premier, you used to say that we should have debate and discussion about these important issues. Can you tell the people of Ontario now why you introduced this bill at a time when all eyes were focused on a federal election, and why now you're bringing in a guillotine order to shut down debate and ram it through?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I'm not sure about the leader of the NDP, but I am confident that Ontarians can manage federal issues and provincial issues, that they can cope with an ongoing federal campaign at the same time as they pay attention to provincial government initiatives.

Again, we've had five days of debate so far on this. Today will be the sixth. We've had 10 days of committee hearings, all kinds of amendments introduced, many of which have been adopted. This idea was first broached in an official way by our government back in 2004. Beyond

that, there have been workshops in each and every LHIN, involving over 4,000 people from a variety of backgrounds. So we think we've given all kinds of opportunity to Ontarians who are interested in this issue to provide us with their very best advice, and much of that advice had been incorporated in the legislation itself. Again, we look forward to moving on.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, just some of the measures included in your LHINs bill: You will set up LHIN boards and LHIN areas in northern Ontario that are larger than most European countries, yet you call this local decision-making about health care; you will give the Minister of Health the authority to order the privatization, for example, of things like hospital cleaning and hospital food services, which directly impact patient care; and you want to do this at a time when the public has spent most of the last eight or nine weeks focused on events in Ottawa.

Premier, do you really think that's fair to the people of Ontario? Do you really think it's fair to ram through a bill that really hasn't had the kind of public attention, public debate and media coverage that health care issues deserve? Do you really think that's fair, Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: What I believe to be unfair is when the leader of the NDP needlessly frightens Ontarians. I think we have a shared responsibility here to talk about the facts as they exist. The leader of the NDP says that this somehow represents some kind of a conspiracy to introduce more private delivery of health care. I want to remind Ontarians that this is the same Mr. Hampton whose government privatized services at the following hospitals: St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital in 1993, the Trillium Health Centre in 1994, the Halton health care centre in 1992 and the Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital in 1991.

I am proud to say that on our watch, as a result of investments we have made, there are now 13,000 more people working in health care in the province of Ontario. If anybody is committed to better health care for more Ontarians, it's this government.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I wonder what the Premier fears from more democratic debate.

Premier, in December, when the Ontario Power Authority released its \$40-billion scheme for more nuclear power plants, you promised "a full, open and public debate." Instead of a full, open, public debate, what we've seen is an attempt at a sales job by your government.

Today, a report by the Sierra Club says that there are serious data gaps in the Ontario Power Authority's supply mix report that bias the report against energy conservation and against energy efficiency. Before you try to ram through your \$40-billion nuclear boondoggle, will you instruct the Ontario Power Authority to go back, do its homework and present a fair and balanced report

that looks seriously at energy efficiency and energy conservation targets?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): Thank you for the question. We received the report from the Ontario Power Authority after they had invested seven months and dealt with many stakeholders over a long period of time, engaging also the Sierra Club and the Pembina Institute, in addition to individuals who wished to participate. That then came to us and we posted it on the Environmental Bill of Rights website. We actually extended the date. We've done 12 cities. We have participated in putting out a new brochure where every Ontarian will have the opportunity to speak with some anonymity around what they see the future of electricity and power will be in this province. And then we will put together some recommendations that will go forward to the Ontario Power Authority, which, in turn, will develop an integrated supply plan. That plan will then go to the Ontario Energy Board.

The Ontario Energy Board will take anywhere from six months to a year to look at prudent and responsible measures with that plan. Then each project will undergo whatever is required—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Hampton: I think the Premier didn't want to answer the question and the minister failed to answer the question.

This is a quote from the Ontario Power Authority report, and they admit what the Sierra Club has charged: "The first requested recommendation is for conservation targets for the long term." Then they say, "The Ontario Power Authority is not in a position to recommend long-term conservation targets at this time." This report doesn't even answer one of the principal demands that was placed upon it by the McGuinty government.

The Sierra Club is simply suggesting: Send it back to the Ontario Power Authority and instruct them to answer the demand. What do they recommend as long-term energy conservation and energy efficiency targets? Don't just try to sell the public on a \$40-billion nuclear megascheme.

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: Actually, the member just made some huge assumptions. The Ontario Power Authority is one set of recommendations. We have been listening to Ontarians right across this province. We haven't finished. As a matter of fact, Ms. May is coming in to see me very shortly, and it will be about the fourth time she has been in to see me, along with Pembina, along with Greenpeace and many other individuals who still choose to.

It is the collective that will ultimately help us make decisions as we move forward and make determinations on what is in the best interests of the people of Ontario. Then there still will be a very fulsome process that people will have an opportunity to continue to consult and engage their opinions in.

I believe that we have put in place a process that is inclusive, that encourages participation, unlike a previous government that actually cancelled consultation on conservation, or another government that chose to sell everything and didn't need to do any consultation because the private sector would pick up everything.

So we have put together a very comprehensive approach—

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary?
1450

Mr. Hampton: Premier, you may be happy with the report that the Sierra Club says is biased in favour of mega-nuclear power and is biased against energy efficiency and conservation, but I think it's pretty clear that people across Ontario want a fair and balanced report; they want consideration of energy efficiency and energy conservation.

My question to the Premier is, are you simply going to allow the Ontario Power Authority to say, in response to your government's demand, "Oh, we're not going to set energy conservation and energy efficiency targets. We're not going to do that; we're simply going to go straight for nuclear power"? Do you think it's an acceptable response to the people of Ontario, to allow that kind of report, which the Sierra Club says is clearly biased and unbalanced in favour of nuclear power and against energy efficiency and energy conservation?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: May I reiterate—obviously the member didn't understand. How about, no?

MURDER INVESTIGATION

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Premier. Given that the two victims involved were both from Ontario, I wonder, by offering to help Ottawa or doing things on your own, what has your government done to assist on the investigation and getting to the bottom of the recent murders that took place in Mexico?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I was asked about this this morning by members of the media and indicated that, on behalf of Ontarians, our expectation is that all authorities will co-operate to the fullest extent possible in order to ensure that the investigation is nothing less than absolutely thorough. We stand at the ready. If there's any role that we can play, any role whatsoever, if we can be of any assistance in any regard, we are more than prepared to do so.

Mr. Tory: I appreciate that answer, because there seem to be a lot of unanswered questions about this and concerns that haven't yet been fully satisfied.

I wonder, beyond indicating to the press and here in this Legislature that you would offer any assistance, has there been even a phone call made to Ottawa or a consultation between the Minister of the Attorney General and the foreign affairs department? I think there are Ontario residents who are concerned about this, both because there are two Ontario residents who are involved

who were the victims, but also because there are a lot of Ontarians who are planning to travel in the next few weeks. I just think it's the kind of thing that, when they see these things in the news media, they worry about. I think anything we could do to be of help to whoever is leading the charge is something we should do. Have we made a proactive offer of assistance to Ottawa in this regard?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Speaker, I think the Attorney General has something to say.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): Yes, we have. We want to be able to assist the victims' families in any way, shape or form, so the Ontario Victim Services Secretariat has contacted the Department of Foreign Affairs and the justice ministries to indicate that if there is any way that the Ontario government can assist victims or victims' families, of course we want to do that.

Obviously, our government offers condolences to the families. If there's any way that we can provide additional assistance, we'd accept any suggestions from the official opposition and the third party, as all of us want to do everything we can to assist victims and, if in any way, assist the federal government as the foreign affairs department and the justice ministries continue to handle this.

TUITION

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): To Mr. Bentley, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities: Before the last election, Monsieur McGuinty and many other Liberal MPPs ranted and raved about the high cost of education for college and university students. Now you're planning on imposing yet another round of tuition hikes on students and their families.

At first you denied it; you promised to consult. But then, before consultations even began, the Premier announced that there would be no discussion. Minister, the cost of education in Ontario has risen by 139% in the last decade. Why are you adding to the cost?

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I don't know why you go back just 10 years, because of course you started that when the NDP promised a freeze in 1990 and increased fees by 50%. That's part of the legacy. A part of the legacy is, since 1990, rapidly increasing fees, little government investment—in some years, disinvestment—and no improvements to student aid. What we said was that we'd freeze fees for two years while we assessed the needs.

The Rae review assessed the needs. We would make substantial investments in post-secondary education to support the education of students—that's the extra \$6.2 billion in assistance for post-secondary education and skills training—and we would substantially improve student assistance for the many students who were ignored by the NDP or the party opposite during the previous years. That is \$1.5 billion. We made the first improvements this year, and there's more to do. And now

we bring in a student tuition framework that will improve both access and quality.

Mr. Marchese: Mr. Bentley claims that high costs are no barrier to education. When I talk to parents and students, they feel differently. When they see that medical school tuition fees at the University of Toronto—

Interjections.

Mr. Marchese: Speaker, you've got to help. These people are—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Stop the clock. Order. I need to be able to hear the member for Trinity-Spadina, and he needs to be able to ask his question without undue assistance. The member from Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Marchese: When students see that medical school tuition fees at the University of Toronto are over \$16,000 a year, they see a barrier. When they see law school tuition rising to \$22,000 a year, they see a barrier. I see a barrier. Students and parents have made it clear that the high cost of education prevents people from getting the education they need.

Minister, I've tabled a bill, Bill 12, that would freeze tuition fees until the next election. If you're confident that higher tuition fees would help students, why not put it to the people in 2007? Will you do that?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: So much passion for people in opposition, so little when they had a chance in government. A 50% increase in fees, and what did they say to the poorest students from the poorest families? They took away the upfront grants for tuition. We restored them this year—32,000.

Did they improve student assistance? Not a penny. We've made improvements benefiting 135,000 students in this year alone.

Did they invest in the quality of their education? Not at all. In the last two years they took money away from students.

Our approach is different. We won't support the type of approach the NDP took. We'll support a different approach: Improve the quality of education through investments, improve access for the students who need it with improvements to student assistance; bring down the barriers for disadvantaged groups, such as first generation students; and come up with a tuition framework that actually improves quality and access. That's the right approach, and that's our direction.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I know that any time there's change on the horizon, people get a little concerned. When I was travelling with the standing committee on social policy, my colleagues and I heard from a lot of people who were very worked up. They were concerned about how LHINs would affect them personally, and they seemed to be concerned because they were the victims of a sustained campaign

that some parties have put in place that was saying things like, "LHINs will result in massive job losses," and health care workers being stripped of their pay and benefits.

Minister, we've worked very hard on this side of the House to establish a track record of fairness and even-handedness in labour relations. Can you please tell me how Bill 36 addresses the concerns of employees in the health sector?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I want to thank the honourable member for the work that she and all others did on the standing committee. It was a challenging task, and we're very grateful for it.

I think it is fair to say that our health care community is still rocked somewhat, if you will, from the work of the Tory legacy, the Harris-Eves days, when there were meaningful cuts to health care. Change is never easy, and we recognize that. But I think it is important to keep in context that, under our government, there are 13,000 additional people working in service to Ontarians in the delivery of health care.

On the matter specifically related to labour, we know that in an environment where we have a quarter of a million employees and thousands of various health care providers there will be opportunities to enhance service delivery. Accordingly, we got advice from unions themselves that Bill 36, the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act, known as PSLRTA to those who are very familiar, will help to cover health integration. We took that advice. And various presenters also brought us recommendations that we include a provision to require employers to develop a human resources adjustment plan. Any time there is a possible impact on employees—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. There may be a supplementary. Supplementary?
1500

Ms. Wynne: Indeed, Minister, the request for that human resources plan did come to us a number of times and it was one of the amendments I was happy to see that we brought forward.

Years of firing nurses and shutting hospital beds under the previous government sapped the morale of those working in health services. They're eager that the government move quickly to improve working conditions for those who dedicate their lives to health care. Can you tell me what we're doing to ensure that Ontario is once again the destination of choice for those interested in establishing a career in health?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: We do think that it's a crucial responsibility of government to create, especially in this competitive environment related to health human resources, a circumstance where Ontario is a preferred destination, where people want to work in our health sectors. A significant part of our initiatives have been designed to stabilize funding for our hospitals; as an example, to give them a better capacity to plan and take advantage of the opportunity to make those environments ones that are more welcoming for their employees and to

make progress on the key challenge of having 70% full-time nurses. We've worked hard, as Doris Grinspun from the registered nurses' association recently acknowledged, by increasing employment in nursing by more than 4,400 full-time nurses. This is evidence of the work we've been doing in addition to the 13,000 employees that we've mentioned have already been added.

I would want to say to the honourable member, and indeed to all members, that forthcoming shortly from Dr. Josh Tepper, our new assistant deputy minister for health human resources, will be a strategy that seeks to take Ontario even further. We know that we've made some good progress, but there is, of course, more to be done. We're restless to get there, and we'll be doing that alongside our—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

MINISTERIAL CONDUCT

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): A question to the Minister of Transportation: As a general rule, if a minister gives false statements in a sworn affidavit, should he or she resign from their cabinet post?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): From my point of view, all the issues have been looked at by the Integrity Commissioner. I have made the statement that I made to the Integrity Commissioner, we discussed it with him and the case is over.

Mr. Hudak: It's just a simple yes or no question to the minister. I simply asked the minister, if it was found that a minister had given false statements in a sworn affidavit, should that minister resign from cabinet? I find it interesting and disappointing that the minister chose not to respond to that question.

The reason I asked it, of course, is because the minister in a sworn affidavit said that he received a call on his cell phone at this infamous meeting at Chalmers. After seven months, we finally received the FOI on his cell phone bills, only to find out that no such call existed on the minister's bills. Minister, how do you rectify your FOI saying one thing and your sworn affidavit saying the opposite?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: When I said I made a call from my cell phone, I didn't say I made a call from the ministry cell phone. Our family has cell phones which we use—I use, my wife uses, my daughters use. So I borrowed a cell phone from my wife and made the cell phone call.

Let me just say this: I think that beliefs and the values are determined in how you are brought up. In our family, everything is not hers or mine; it's ours. That's what we believe in, okay? When I said "mine," that was our family cell phone.

REPETITIVE STRAIN INJURY

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): To the Minister of Labour: Study after study tells us that applied ergonomics and early intervention can prevent repetitive strain injuries in the workplace if legislation is imple-

mented. When will Ontarians see real ergonomics regulations that will protect the workers of this province?

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): I want to thank the member for raising the question today because this is Repetitive Strain Injury Awareness Day and it's an important day. We recognize the challenges that are out there.

I just want to say to the honourable member that if he thinks he has a monopoly on caring about injured workers in this province, he's very much wrong. We do care about injured workers in this province. You're the ones that sent us down this course, that put injured workers so far behind with that bill in 1994. Look at Hansard for December 6, 1994. Who started injured workers down this road?

We moved very actively in moving forward with a joint committee to make sure that we had a balanced approach of both employers and employees. I very much resent the comment that was made that I'm in the back pocket of the employers. As the Minister of Labour, I'm charged with the responsibility to ensure that we bring a balanced approach. We've asked for recommendations. There was not a consensus—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. The member for Niagara Centre.

Mr. Kormos: All you've done to date is create a website, as if injured workers needed more information about the tragedy of being injured in the workplace. Look, raising awareness amongst the general public just isn't good enough. British Columbia and Saskatchewan have ergonomic regulations that work. When is your government going to implement ergonomic regulations that have been tested, that have been tried, that have been demonstrated to be effective? I tell you, Minister, that your efforts to achieve balance betray workers on a daily basis in this province.

Hon. Mr. Peters: I beg to differ with the member, because we have not demonstrated in any way that we've betrayed workers in this province. I thank those individuals who were here today. I thank my parliamentary assistant for meeting with them outside of my office today.

We took a balanced approach. One year ago today, the previous minister struck a joint committee to bring forward recommendations to the minister. Those recommendations were brought forward to me in September. Part of the reporting was for them to come back to see if there was a consensus that could be developed on the creation of a regulation. There was no consensus developed when they reported back to me a week ago. I've received the report, and I'll be meeting with the committee again in March to look at how we do move things forward. But for the honourable member to stand here in this House and claim that he is this advocate for injured workers—I just remind him again, and I remind the injured workers of the province, that it was the NDP that undermined—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay–Atikokan): My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. We've heard a lot about the challenges that northern industries are facing: changing global markets, increasing competition, the high cost of fibre, energy and a dramatic shift in currency rates. All of these combined are taking their toll, most notably on the forestry sector. Forestry is a vital part of the economy in northern Ontario and in Ontario generally. The sector employs about 80,000 people and contributes about \$18 billion to the economy annually. In my riding, many people make a living from forestry and its spinoff industries. Minister, can you tell me more about what our government is doing to make sure that forestry continues to be a strong and competitive industry in Ontario?

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): I was very proud of the Premier's announcement last Wednesday of additional assistance to the forest industry of this province. As the member knows, from the spring and the fall, we had announcements totalling \$680 million in grants and guaranteed loans. As the Premier said, we knew we needed to do more in working with the industry, and the Premier announced an additional \$220 million. The very important part about that, I think, was the \$75 million a year that has basically uploaded the responsibility of building and maintaining primary and secondary forest access roads, primarily across northern Ontario—a very important contribution, as well as a surprise for the industry that we injected \$70 million of unexpected capital infusion into the companies to allow them to gain the confidence to make the investments needed to go forward to make sure we have a strong, sustainable industry in this province.

Mr. Mauro: My supplementary is for the Minister of Energy. Last week's announcement was very good news, as was illustrated by the remarks from the large industrials themselves. However, they still face other challenges, as we're all aware. Building access roads and reducing stumpage fees will help the sector deal with some of these challenges, but they still face others like energy costs. In terms of energy, I've been advocating for two years the need to have an electricity pricing policy that ensures the competitive position of northwestern Ontario's large industrials. This is one option that the government could look at to lessen those challenges. We need to provide the forest sector with stable energy costs. This is key to ensuring that they remain competitive. They need to know what the price of power will be, to better estimate their production costs. Minister, what are we doing to ensure that the forest sector has that stability?

1510

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: I'll refer that to the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): First, I would like to say to the member from Thunder

Bay-Atikokan that he has indeed been an extraordinary advocate on behalf of his community. He has not just come forward in terms of the challenges, but he has also come forward with solutions on how we can find different ways to do business in the north. The north is well served by that member.

We were fortunate enough to listen to our stakeholders. We made a change around the revenue limit. It was previously going to collapse on April 30, 2006. We've reduced it to 4.6, 4.7 and 4.8 and extended the revenue limit cap until 2009. This is an extension, as I indicated, that has support from the stakeholder groups themselves.

But in addition to that, part of our responsibility is to work with the community. The Premier did indicate that there is a study we will undertake around regionally-based pricing. We know that it's a very complex and difficult issue, but we are committed to do this—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. New question.

WESTPORT POND

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): I have a question for the Minister of Natural Resources. I'm not sure you've ever visited the village of Westport, but the chap sitting in front of you has, on a number of occasions, and he can tell you about the Westport Pond. It's been designated as a sanctuary for approximately 50 years. Now, under this review of fishing regulations in Ontario undertaken by your ministry, you are indicating that you're going to remove the sanctuary designation. You've been contacted by the Westport and Rideau Lakes Chamber of Commerce, the village council and many others with respect to their concern. This is a major tourist attraction in this small, beautiful village. There's no cost associated with maintaining the sanctuary designation, which has been in place for half a century. Will you commit today to retaining that designation for the Westport Pond in that beautiful village?

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): As the member knows, from time to time we revisit all our regulations in regard to the management of wildlife in Ontario. The member knows that right now we are revisiting our very complicated fishing regulations and reducing fishing zones from 37 across this province down to 20, at the same time basing those on ecological zones that are sensitive to weather, water temperature and fish species, so that we get a more accurate read and control of fishing, and doing that to enhance habitat. I think, in the end, when we get through this, we'll have better regulations, a better habitat for fish and a more flourishing fish life in this province.

Mr. Runciman: That kind of response is what disappoints people right across the province. I asked him a very specific question about the Westport Pond, and he got up and talked about nothing anywhere related to my question.

I'll go back to the minister. This is a significant concern in this small, beautiful community. This impacts across the whole Rideau Lakes area. I'm asking you, are you going to retain the sanctuary designation for Westport Pond? Also, in terms of regulations, will you commit to having a public meeting in the Rideau area before you finalize those regulations?

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: I would want to assure the member that no decision is final there. I obviously will take the member's advice on this. We have received some letters and phone calls on this particular issue. We obviously want to listen to that local input. I'm very pleased that the member has brought that up to me again today. I will work with the member and we will resolve this issue.

CANCER SCREENING

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Minister of Health. On March 9, 2005, I wrote to encourage you to fund a province-wide screening program for colorectal cancer. In your reply of January 2006, you indicated you were waiting for a final report and recommendations from Cancer Care Ontario in this regard. Several weeks ago, Cancer Care Ontario released its 2005 progress report and in it recommended a population-based provincial colorectal screening program in Ontario. Minister, will you be funding this program?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I appreciate the question from the honourable member. I was very pleased to be there on the day when Cancer Care Ontario released its report, calling, as their number one priority, for the development of a colorectal screening program. It was the same day, coincidentally, that Cancer Care Ontario announced a 16% year-over-year reduction in wait times for radiation. So I think that does mark the terrific relationship we have with them in our desire to do a better job for people in Ontario.

No other province has so far implemented that. We think it's important that Ontario be a leader. We're working very hard with Cancer Care Ontario on what a program might look like. I'm not in a position today to make such an announcement, but I can assure the honourable member, as I did the media and others present that day, that we're working very hard and we do see it as an important priority, of course.

Ms. Martel: Minister, you know that support for the program is very high; it's very strong. In December 2002, the National Committee on Colorectal Cancer Screening recommended screening for adults age 50 to 74 every two years. The Canadian Cancer Society, Ontario division, said that colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer in Ontario—over 3,000 Ontarians died of it in 2005—but it is 90% treatable if it's found early through screening. Cancer Care Ontario has submitted an application to your ministry which would involve a step-by-step implementation plan for a screening program, including wide mass media for both primary care physicians and adults.

Minister, during the 2003 election campaign your party promised a screening program for colorectal cancer. When can we expect you to deliver on this promise?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I want to say to the honourable member, and maybe just repeat a little bit of what I said in my first answer, that of course we're very committed to fulfilling that commitment because we support all of the messaging that was associated with the honourable member's question. We do recognize that we have the potential to save lives related to a colorectal screening program. We're working very closely with Cancer Care Ontario on what the details of such a program would look like, building on the information we've all gained as a result of the pilot.

Accordingly, like I said earlier, I'm not in a position today to make an announcement, but I would want to give indication to the honourable member, to all honourable members indeed, that we do see this as a priority. We're working very hard to the point where we can move forward and be able to offer those enhanced protections to all of our residents in Ontario.

SKILLED TRADES DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): My question today is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Recently, in the media there have been a number of articles discussing the impending shortage of skilled tradespeople in Canada and in Ontario.

Even today, my own hometown paper, the Peterborough Examiner, printed an article by a faculty member of Fleming college, highlighting the future need for workers who are training in the trades. It said that Skills Canada is identifying that "40% of new jobs in the next 20 years will be in skilled trades and technologies."

Our economy relies on skilled tradespeople such as plumbers, electricians, chefs and welders, who start out as apprentices in order for the province to compete in the global marketplace. Minister, what is your ministry doing to help encourage individuals pursue gold-collar trades in the trades?

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I'd like to thank the member from Peterborough for the question and for his advocacy on this very important issue over the years. He has spoken to me about it a number of times.

There are several levels at which we're working. First of all, we need to excite young people about the opportunities that the trades present: a fabulous income, good benefits and job opportunities you can take anywhere in the world. We're working together with the Ministry of Education. They have the Learning to 18 initiative to excite young people about the opportunities, and specifically support it with the Ontario youth apprenticeship program, which gives high school students a taste of what the trade is like—this year alone, 20,000 opportunities for young people.

It doesn't end there. We have a scholarship and signing bonus for young people who have left school, decide

to come back, finish their high school and then get signed by an employer. It doesn't end there. We have some enhanced learning initiatives for young people who wish to go on and complete their high school so they can get into a trade. It's not commonly known, but you do need high school in order to complete a trade. And we have our apprenticeship action table—employers, business, educators—that ensures we will make a stronger system in the—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Leal: As larger numbers of workers reach retirement, it will be important for these new apprentices to receive their education, training and work experience to keep our skilled trades alive in the province. There are many fine community colleges across Ontario providing excellent apprenticeship training to individuals looking to become skilled trades workers. There's also a wide range of employers who help apprentices obtain the work experience and mentoring they need to excel in their chosen trade.

Minister, what is the government doing to assist colleges and employers develop and train our next generation of apprentices?

1520

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I just happened to be speaking yesterday to the president of one of those fine community colleges, Fleming college up in Peterborough, no less.

What are we doing? We're doing several things. First of all, we're supporting the infrastructure for trades training in the colleges with our apprenticeship enhancement fund, \$10 million this year, which we just announced. It doesn't end there.

After years of underfunding, we're improving the funding necessary to support apprenticeship and trades programs in colleges. Fleming College received \$2.9 million from the quality improvement fund this year alone. It doesn't end there.

In addition to that, Fleming also qualifies as a college in a predominantly rural area and they received, just recently, another \$2 million in additional funding. We also have co-op diploma apprenticeship programs—1,000 students across the province benefit from that—and we just recently announced 700 more spots for pre-apprenticeship program—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

PRIVATE TOLL BRIDGE

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a question for the Premier, to do with the border crossing at Fort Frances and International Falls, Minnesota. There's a private bridge there and it's currently owned by Boise Cascade and Abitibi Consolidated. They have put that bridge up for sale as they struggle under the economic reality of northern Ontario under the Dalton McGuinty government. My question is, will the province assist the municipalities financially in purchasing the bridge or, better still, will the province take over ownership of the

bridge, as this is a very important gateway to north-western Ontario with some 900,000 crossings annually?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): We are very much aware of this issue. Actually, we met with the mayor of Fort Frances back in November, along with federal officials. I understand the bridge is now for sale. My officials talked to the mayor this afternoon. He has not made any formal request for assistance of any sort at this point of time, but I want to assure the member that we'll be more than pleased to work with the mayor and the local municipality, and even across the border, to sort out this issue.

Mr. Miller: I'm pleased to hear that the government is willing to work with the municipalities. As I say, it's a very important link in the northwest. The current situation with this bridge is that there's a toll going one way. There's a toll going into Canada, and it's a very expensive toll. In fact, the mayor of Fort Frances, Dan Onichuk describes the bridge as being one of the most expensive crossings in the country and states, in this recent article, "Cutting the fees could be a huge incentive for companies looking to relocate to the area."

My question is, will you not only assist, but will you ensure that the bridge, when it moves into public hands, will have no toll at that important crossing into Fort Frances?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: As I said, when we found out that the bridge might be put up for sale, we started having discussions with the local mayor and the federal officials. I just said that the mayor has not indicated what kind of assistance he needs. If he needs any assistance, we will be more than pleased to work with him.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): New question.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I have a question for the Minister of Transportation. I've been listening to your answers, Minister. The mayor of Fort Frances, though, tells a completely different version of the events. Just a couple of weeks ago, there was a meeting. The federal government of the United States was there, state of Minnesota representatives were there, people from the city of International Falls, Minnesota, were there, but no one from the McGuinty government was prepared to come to the meeting and talk about how this bridge, which is now privately owned and has exorbitant tolls, could become part of the public infrastructure. Minister, can you tell me how it is that the US federal government is there, the state of Minnesota is there, the city of International Falls is there and the town of Fort Frances is there, but the McGuinty government is nowhere to be found when it comes to this important piece of infrastructure?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: If I'm not wrong, this bridge has been private since 1979, and I'm sure the NDP government was in power after that. I just want to know, what did you do to bring this under public control?

Let me tell you what I did. As soon as we heard that this bridge was being put up for sale, we met with the mayor of Fort Frances. We met with federal officials. We called him today and said, "Do you need any kind of assistance? Can we be of any help?" At this point, he has not indicated that he needs any kind of assistance.

Mr. Hampton: The state of Minnesota wants to turn this into a public asset. The people in northwestern Ontario want to turn this into a public asset. It's important for the transportation of forest products. It's important for the 500,000 tourists who come from the United States into northwestern Ontario every year. What they can't figure out is why, when there was a meeting held to talk about how you turn a private bridge with exorbitant tolls into a piece of public transportation infrastructure, the McGuinty government wasn't interested enough to show up. Can we get a commitment today that the government of Ontario, the McGuinty government, will do everything that is necessary to ensure that this bridge becomes a public transportation asset and is not sold off to a company which is interested only in raising the tolls even higher?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: Let me say this: The leader of the third party started talking about this bridge when it was put up for sale the other day. We started meeting with the mayor back in November. Not only that, but we have asked him if he needed any assistance. I asked him again today. He said he has not formally asked for any assistance from the province. But let me assure you that we think this bridge is important, and we think if the municipality needs any assistance, we will work with them.

FREDERICK BANTING HOMESTEAD

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): My question is for my neighbour, the member for Ottawa-Vanier, the Minister of Culture. In the wake of Heritage Week, during which we enjoyed celebrations of our heritage across the province, a matter concerning a property has come to my attention. In the riding of Simcoe-Grey it is being said that the Banting homestead, under the auspices of the Ontario Historical Society, is being neglected and that its roof has collapsed. It has also been said that the OHS and the town of New Tecumseth have not spoken for over a year. Minister, how can you claim to care for the province's heritage if an organization funded by your ministry leaves buildings and property under your care in disrepair?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I thank my colleague, the MPP for Ottawa-Orléans, for his long support of heritage property. I'm glad to have the opportunity to clarify some misunderstandings surrounding this case.

The Banting property was bequeathed to the Ontario Historical Society by the late Edward Knight Banting of Alliston. This is a property that is associated with the young Sir Frederick Banting, who, as you know, was the co-discoverer of insulin. In order to address the situation

involving this property, my ministry has asked the provincial development facilitator to help develop an approach to preserve the Banting homestead. Negotiations between the town of New Tecumseth and the Ontario Historical Society Foundation are just beginning.

I'd like to remind this House that amendments made to the Ontario Heritage Act last year provide the town of Tecumseth with the tools to protect the Banting farm from alteration and even demolition. I wanted to say to this House that it was never the intention of the Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Energy concerning Portlands Energy Centre and conservation. This matter will be debated at 6 p.m.

PETITIONS

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Honourable Michael Bryant is minister responsible for democratic renewal;

“Whereas the Honourable Michael Bryant, Attorney General of Ontario, is elected to safeguard our justice system on behalf of the people of Ontario;

“Whereas the Ministry of our Attorney General may not be aware of the serious and important issues facing individuals involved in areas of the justice system even though the Attorney General's ministry is continually monitoring;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Honourable Michael Bryant, Attorney General, for his in-depth investigation of the Ontario judicial system and [to] make the public aware of his findings immediately.”

I affix my name in full support.

1530

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads:

“Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

“Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

“Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community.”

This petition has been signed by several people from the town of Fort Frances, and I have affixed my signature as well.

REGULATED HEALTH PROFESSIONS

Mr. Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay–Superior North): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“We, the undersigned, are calling for the government of Ontario to modify an existing piece of legislation, the Regulated Health Professions Act, RHPA, which places restrictions on social workers' and other disciplines' use of the title ‘Dr.’ when providing or offering to provide health care to individuals in Ontario.

“This RHPA restriction allows use of the title ‘Dr.’ to the following five disciplines: chiropractors, dentists, optometrists, physicians and psychologists. This restriction is an anomaly and specific to Ontario. It violates the universally respected rights of universities to grant degrees with all the intended rights, privileges and obligations.

“Whereas we, the undersigned, support the review and amendment of the restriction of the title ‘Dr.’ under the Regulated Health Professions Act,

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to support this review as follows.”

This has been signed by hundreds of petitioners. It was sent to me by Dr. Julie Woit in Thunder Bay. I'm very pleased to sign in support of this petition.

WINDSOR CORRIDOR

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I have the pleasure to present, as the transportation critic, a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas we, the undersigned petitioners of Windsor and LaSalle, oppose changes to Huron Church, Talbot Road and Highway 3 because no short-term capacity will be added to the Windsor-Detroit gateway; and

“Whereas infrastructure changes along this corridor will only negatively impact residential neighbourhoods, tourism, retail and wholesale commerce, and therefore are unacceptable;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario” and the Ministry of Transportation “to recognize that this corridor is made up of an interconnected, continuous residential road that is

home to a number of successful businesses. We request that you act to protect Huron Church, Talbot Road and Highway 3."

I'm pleased to support this, on behalf of the people of Windsor, in my duty as critic of the Ministry of Transportation.

REPETITIVE STRAIN INJURY

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I have a petition in regard to ergonomics regulations.

"Whereas repetitive strain injuries, back injuries and musculoskeletal injuries are of epidemic proportions and are on the rise at an alarming rate, affecting workers in all sectors; and

"Whereas the human cost and suffering to workers and loved ones is incalculable; and

"Whereas there have been many workplace ergonomic studies that have provided evidence that applied ergonomics and early intervention could prevent such injuries if regulations and standards for the workplace were established; and

"Whereas British Columbia and Saskatchewan have provincial ergonomic regulations;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Ministry of Labour, the provincial Legislative Assembly and Parliament as follows:

"That the Minister of Labour introduce ergonomics regulations similar to the British Columbia ergonomic regulation and draft code of practice, to protect the workers of this province and Canada."

It's signed by literally thousands of organized workers in Ontario.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the people of Ontario expect the government of Canada to honour existing agreements with the government of Ontario;

"Whereas provinces and territories negotiated agreements with the federal government to ensure Canadians would have access to early learning and child care programs that are high-quality, affordable, universally inclusive and developmental;

"Whereas parents in Ontario have demonstrated a high demand for greater access to high-quality early learning and child care programs;

"Whereas Ontario's early learning and child care agreement with the government of Canada would provide Ontario families with at least 25,000 new high-quality, regulated child care spaces in the first three years;

"Whereas Ontario's early learning and child care agreement represents a \$1.9-billion investment over five years in high-quality early learning and child care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the government of Ontario in calling on the government of Canada to honour Ontario's early learning and child care agreement, for the sake of

the thousands of Ontario families who would benefit from it."

I agree with this petition. I'm going to affix my signature to it and give it to page Anindita.

FREDERICK BANTING HOMESTEAD

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Sir Frederick Banting was the man who discovered insulin and was Canada's first Nobel Prize recipient; and

"Whereas this great Canadian's original homestead, located in the town of New Tecumseth, is deteriorating and in danger of destruction because of the inaction of the Ontario Historical Society; and

"Whereas the town of New Tecumseth has been unsuccessful in reaching an agreement with the Ontario Historical Society to use part of the land to educate the public about the historical significance of the work of Sir Frederick Banting;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Culture endorse Simcoe-Grey MPP Jim Wilson's private member's bill entitled the Frederick Banting Homestead Preservation Act so that the homestead is kept in good repair and preserved for generations to come."

REPETITIVE STRAIN INJURY

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a petition with thousands upon thousands of signatures, stating:

"Whereas repetitive strain injuries, back injuries and musculoskeletal injuries are of epidemic proportions and are on the rise at an alarming rate affecting workers in all sectors; and

"Whereas the human cost and suffering to workers and loved ones is incalculable; and

"Whereas there have been many workplace ergonomic studies that have provided evidence that applied ergonomics and early intervention could prevent such injuries if regulations and standards for the workplace were established; and

"Whereas British Columbia and Saskatchewan have provincial ergonomic regulations;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Minister of Labour, the provincial Legislative Assembly and Parliament as follows:

"That the Minister of Labour introduce ergonomics regulations similar to the British Columbia ergonomic regulation and draft code of practice, to protect the workers of this province and Canada."

CHILD CARE

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the people of Ontario expect the government of Canada to honour existing agreements with the government of Ontario;

"Whereas provinces and territories negotiated agreements with the federal government to ensure Canadians would have access to early learning and child care programs that are high quality, affordable, universally inclusive and developmental;

"Whereas parents in Ontario have demonstrated a high demand for greater access to high-quality early learning and child care programs;

"Whereas Ontario's early learning and child care agreement with the government of Canada would provide Ontario families with at least 25,000 new high-quality, regulated child care spaces in the first three years;

"Whereas Ontario's early learning and child care agreement represents a \$1.9-billion investment over five years in high-quality early learning and child care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the government of Ontario in calling on the government of Canada to honour Ontario's early learning and child care agreement, for the sake of the thousands of Ontario families who would benefit from it."

I'll affix my signature to this petition.

1540

FISH STOCKING PROGRAM

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources' provincial fish hatchery program annually stocks over 10 million fish into over 1,200 water bodies within the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas provincial fish hatcheries contain unique genetic strains of indigenous fish species; and

"Whereas recreational fishing is a multi-billion dollar industry and a huge contributor to tourism and the economy throughout the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the world-class Great Lakes salmon fishery, as well as many local fisheries throughout the province, are dependent on the Ministry of Natural Resources' fish stocking program;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the government of Ontario and the Minister of Natural Resources to refrain from any cutbacks or cancellations to this provincially significant program."

I affix my name in full support.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that has been sent to me by Avery Thurman, who lives in Oshawa, Ontario. It reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, are concerned about Bill 36 and want changes before third reading of the bill takes place and it becomes law. Our concerns include:

"There is no protection against OHIP services being cut;

"Canada Health principles of comprehensiveness, universality, accessibility, portability and public administration are not included;

"This is not really local, as Durham region LHIN will be called the Central East LHIN, which will extend from Scarborough to Peterborough to Haliburton;

"Since services will be on a bidding process, like home care, it could be possible that the services we value in the Durham region, like hip and knee replacements, will be transferred out of the Durham region, making it more difficult for patients and their families if other area bids are lower;

"The potential for upheaval this bill will cause for health care workers may discourage people from entering the field in Ontario, thus further causing shortages, and there is already a shortage of nurses and other health care workers."

I agree with the petitioners. I have affixed my signature to this.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the people of Ontario expect the government of Canada to honour existing agreements with the government of Ontario;

"Whereas provinces and territories negotiated agreements with the federal government to ensure Canadians would have access to early learning and child care programs that are high-quality, affordable, universally inclusive and developmental;

"Whereas parents in Ontario have demonstrated a high demand for greater access to high-quality early learning and child care programs;

"Whereas Ontario's early learning and child care agreement with the government of Canada would provide Ontario families with at least 25,000 new high-quality, regulated child care spaces in the first three years;

"Whereas Ontario's early learning and child care agreement represents a \$1.9-billion investment over five years in high-quality early learning and child care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the government of Ontario in calling on the government of Canada to honour Ontario's early learning and child care agreement, for the sake of the thousands of Ontario families who would benefit from it."

I support this petition and affix my signature to it.

PROPERTY RIGHTS

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): This petition is titled "Support the Land Rights and

Responsibilities Act,” with signatures from the Oxford-Norfolk-Elgin landowners’ association, farmers from Langton, Courtland and Staffordville:

“To the Parliament of Ontario:

“Whereas the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is silent on property rights; and

“Whereas the Alberta Bill of Rights specifically protects the right to the enjoyment of property; and

“Whereas the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms provides that ‘Every person has a right to the peaceful enjoyment and free disposition of his property, except to the extent provided by law’; and

“Whereas Ontario no longer has property or land rights;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To pass Bill 57, the Land Rights and Responsibilities Act, 2006.”

I also add my signature to this petition.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition that I have received from residents of Scarborough Southwest. It’s regarding Bill 36 and is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It’s a quite lengthy petition regarding the public consultation process regarding Bill 36, and I’d like to table it with the Clerk today.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I have a petition that’s been sent to me, having to do with the Velcade issue. It reads as follows:

“Whereas Ontario has an inconsistent policy for access to new cancer treatments while these drugs are under review for funding; and

“Whereas cancer patients taking oral chemotherapy may apply for a section 8 exception under the Ontario drug benefit plan, with no such exception policy in place for intravenous cancer drugs administered in hospital; and

“Whereas this is an inequitable, inconsistent and unfair policy, creating two classes of cancer patients with further inequities on the basis of personal wealth and the willingness of hospitals to risk budgetary deficits to provide new intravenous chemotherapy treatments; and

“Whereas cancer patients have the right to the most effective care recommended by their doctors;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to provide immediate access to Velcade and other intravenous chemotherapy while these new cancer drugs are under review and provide a consistent policy for access to new cancer treatments that enables oncologists to apply for exceptions to meet the needs of patients.”

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES SERVICES À L’ENFANCE ET À LA FAMILLE

Mrs. Chambers moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 210, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act and make complementary amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 210, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l’enfance et à la famille et apportant des modifications complémentaires à d’autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the minister for her leadoff remarks.

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): I’m pleased to rise today to talk about Bill 210, the government’s child protection legislation, which is before this House for third reading. The fundamental goal of this legislation is to build a child protection system that is better for children, a system that puts the interests of the children first in every instance, a system that is accountable to the community it serves. The very thoughtful and well-considered amendments that have been made as the bill has moved through first and second readings and through committee hearings will provide stronger protection for children and greater accountability to the children, their families and the broader community.

I want to take a moment to thank my colleagues in this House and those individuals who came to us through public hearings and committee meetings to make improvements to this bill. Thirty-five amendments have been made to Bill 210 since second reading, five of which came from the NDP. These improvements have made this bill even stronger and will help to make Ontario’s child protection system much more accountable. If passed, these changes will provide more hope, support and stability to vulnerable children in Ontario. It will do this by making children’s aid societies more accountable to the children and families they serve and more accountable to their communities through a stronger complaints and appeals process. It will do this by helping more children who are crown wards find a loving, adoptive family by making adoption more flexible for children and less complicated for prospective parents. It will do this by providing more options so more children who need protection, even those who are not adopted, can grow up in a safe, caring, permanent home. And it will do this by helping to resolve cases outside the courtroom more quickly, through collaborative solutions such as mediation.

The children and youth who come into the care of children’s aid societies come from incredibly challenging circumstances. We need to know that children in need of protection are indeed better off because a children’s aid

society was there to help. It is our collective responsibility, and it is a responsibility that this government believes is of the utmost importance. That's why we're strengthening the system so that our children's aid societies are more accountable to the children and families they serve.

Currently, there is no province-wide standard as to how complaints against children's aid societies are handled. We are proposing a consistent process for the review of children's aid society decisions that would include strict timelines. Timelines are crucial, because when we're looking at who will care for a child or where that child will live, we must act with careful consideration as well as speed and efficiency.

1550

Since this bill has been before the House, we have heard a number of proposals for a new approach to handling complaints about children's aid societies. We have taken all those proposals into consideration, and from those proposals we're putting forward what we believe is a complaints system that will be effective, unbiased, expeditious and binding. The complaints processes that exist now do not sufficiently meet those criteria. We need a process that responds to the urgent and sensitive nature of child protection. We need a process that is timely and results in binding decisions.

We are proposing the involvement of a neutral third party to help resolve complaints, the Child and Family Services Review Board. If passed, this option will give families, be they birth parents, adoptive parents or other caregivers in the community, an unbiased, impartial place to turn to if they feel their complaints are not being dealt with fairly. The Child and Family Services Review Board is that place.

The Ombudsman will play a key role in this new process, because in Ontario the Ombudsman has jurisdiction over the Child and Family Services Review Board. This means that the oversight of the office of the Ombudsman is one of the critical checks and balances that will, if this legislation is passed, be in place.

Let me say also that we want children and families to benefit fully from these more stringent accountability measures. Our proposal also includes a plan to let families know how they can access the complaints process if their concerns are not being met. This new, stronger complaints process would be in addition to regulations we have in place to keep children's aid societies accountable to the children and families they serve and to the broader public.

The family courts, the auditor, the police and the coroner also have important roles to play. In fact, my ministry has been working with the coroner to further strengthen the child death review process and to hold children's aid societies accountable for implementing recommendations that result from these reviews.

I believe that with scrutiny comes strength, and I believe we're building that strength into this bill. From families to children's aid societies to the courts and community watchdogs, I know we share the same goal: a

child protection system that works exceedingly well for children.

It is a goal that we share with Ontario's aboriginal community. Since this legislation was introduced, I have dedicated a lot of time to meeting with and listening to representatives of Ontario's aboriginal community. My ministry staff have also participated in those and several other meetings. They also joined aboriginal community leaders as part of a four-day meeting in Sault Ste. Marie. Together they produced tangible solutions to address the aboriginal community's concerns with the original legislation.

I mention the aboriginal community specifically because aboriginal children and youth are disproportionately represented in our child protection system. I'm determined to do whatever I can to address the needs of this community. I have had several meetings with aboriginal chiefs, leaders and service providers. We have discussed on-reserve and off-reserve challenges and solutions. I asked them to work with my ministry to make Bill 210 better for aboriginal children and youth. Twenty amendments have been made to this bill as a result of these discussions.

Under the current system, aboriginal children who come into the care of a children's aid society are often placed in non-aboriginal foster care. This bill places a strong emphasis on placing children with extended family and community. For aboriginal children, this may occur through customary care, so that aboriginal children and youth can stay in their communities and maintain important cultural and family ties.

This is a stronger bill because of the commitment and the diligent work that our aboriginal partners have put into it. But while much progress has been made, our discussions with the aboriginal community will not end with the passage of Bill 210. We will continue to work together to address the needs of their community.

The substantial amendments that have been made to this legislation strengthen the bill. That has always represented an important step forward for our child protection system. Bill 210 is about helping vulnerable children grow up in homes that are safe and secure, homes that help these children succeed in school, homes that give them the tools they need to succeed in life.

There is no question that this is a challenging task. Currently, Ontario's children's aid societies receive almost 160,000 calls each year reporting child abuse and neglect. In many of these situations, child protection staff can support parents so they're better able to care for their children. However, there are still about 9,000 children in the permanent care of Ontario's children's aid societies. These children are known as crown wards. They live in foster homes or in group homes. On average, they change homes every 22 months, and they change schools. They need to make new friends in their new neighbourhoods, and a new foster family or group home may mean new rules and new expectations. That kind of instability can affect every aspect of a child's life.

Of the 9,000 children who are crown wards, we're seeing just over 900 adoptions a year, or about 10%. I

think we can do better than that. I know we must do better than that. We need to help more children find a permanent, caring home by making adoption more flexible for individual children and parents.

Our government's reforms would allow a child to maintain ties to his or her birth family after being adopted. Right now, 75% of children in permanent care cannot be adopted because their birth family has a court-ordered right to contact them. When judges make an order that a child become a ward of the crown, they may be hesitant to seal off all contact with the family except in those cases where there is an issue of safety. So the birth family might have the opportunity to visit the child, say, twice a year. That often makes sense so that the child doesn't completely lose touch with their birth family, but it should not automatically make the child ineligible to become a member of a permanent family. These proposed changes would mean that, where appropriate, a child could keep those important ties to their family, community and culture and still be adopted or placed in a permanent home.

We know that adoption will help a number of children find a secure, stable family, but we also know it is not the answer for every child. The proposed changes would give children's aid societies more flexibility to meet the unique needs of each child. For some children, it would mean being placed with extended family, people they already know and trust. Under the current system, most children who are removed from their homes are placed in foster care or in a group home. This would result in less disruption for a child who has already been through too much.

The safety and well-being of all children who come in contact with the child protection system continues to be our top priority. Let me be clear: Before placing a child in any home, the process must always start with a rigorous safety and risk assessment. The completion of an appropriate assessment, including background checks on all adults who live in the home, is a critical safeguard for all placements. Some believe that the ability of a children's aid society to place a child with an extended family member might make the society's job easier. This is not necessarily the case. In fact, the need for stringent safeguards is just as important in such circumstances. That is why children's aid societies must conduct a mandatory background check and home assessment before placing a child, including placement with extended family members.

We know that not all children have a family member who is an appropriate caregiver. In such cases, there may be other adults willing and able to provide a loving, stable home. It could be the child's long-time foster parent or another important person in that child's life. If passed, this bill will provide greater opportunity for these children to grow up in a permanent, loving home.

The proposed changes I have mentioned are part of our government's plan to help more children and youth in the care of children's aid societies thrive in a safe, stable and supportive home.

We're also removing some of the barriers that often discourage people from adopting children in Ontario. Parents who have tried to adopt a child from a children's aid society will tell you that it's a cumbersome, inconsistent process. We're improving the application process so there is a standard, consistent application for both public and private adoptions. This will make the process simpler for those parents who are looking to adopt a child in Ontario, either through a children's aid society or through a private adoption agency.

1600

We're working with the Adoption Council of Ontario and with our children's aid societies to provide a province-wide, web-based system that will bring together children who are available for adoption with families who want to adopt.

To provide appropriate protection and supports for our children, there will be post-adoption support so that families who adopt a child from a children's aid society aren't left on their own if they are in need of support.

We know that we can improve children's prospects for a productive, healthy and overall successful adulthood by helping to provide them with a loving, stable home in their childhood.

In order for these changes to be effective, we need to also make some changes to the way our 53 children's aid societies work. We have introduced a new funding model that places a greater emphasis on the specific results we want to see for children, like more adoptions and the use of other forms of dispute resolution. We want children's aid societies to better match their level of response to the individual needs of the child. We want children's aid societies to support and strengthen families as they face challenges so that they can take better care of their kids themselves.

If passed, Bill 210 should result in the use of more collaborative solutions to resolve child protection matters rather than resorting to lengthy court proceedings. A number of provinces and states already look beyond the courtroom to settle some child protection disputes. They use mediation, family conferences and talking circles. Evaluations consistently show positive results, including more timely resolutions, higher rates of settlements, more satisfied families and better communication between the parties involved. This is consistent with our goal of a system that works better for children.

It is with that in mind that we are working with our children's aid societies to develop a comprehensive information system. Many children's aid societies regularly share information, but currently there is not a consistent, uniform practice for sharing what can be critical information. We are working closely with the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies and the Ministry of Finance to make that province-wide system a reality.

To conclude, as I said earlier, the legislative changes we are proposing are part of a broad reform of Ontario's child protection system. The bill before the House today, together with the regulations that will follow and the policy changes that have already been implemented, is

designed to make the child protection system work better for Ontario's vulnerable children and youth.

If passed, Ontarians will see children's aid societies that are more accountable to the children and families they serve, with a stronger, more accessible and more responsive complaints process; more children who are crown wards being adopted into loving families, with rules that make adoption more flexible for children and less complicated for prospective parents; more children growing up in safe, caring, permanent homes and familiar supportive communities rather than moving from one place to another, again and again; and more child protection cases being resolved outside the courtroom through collaborative solutions such as mediation.

I ask my colleagues in this House to join me in supporting this bill so that we can improve the lives of Ontario's most vulnerable children and youth.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I'm pleased to respond to the comments from the Minister of Children and Youth Services. I'd like to ask the minister how her dumpling making went this morning, because I happened to be watching Breakfast Television first thing morning—although it was pancake day, so I'm not quite sure why you were making dumplings.

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: It's a multicultural pancake.

Mr. Miller: Multicultural pancakes, okay.

I'm very pleased to comment on Bill 210, the Child and Family Services Statute Law Amendment Act. The minister, at the beginning of her speech, said that they're putting children first, and certainly no one would argue with that goal. How you do this and how you arrive at that goal might be debated, but the goal certainly would not be.

I'm pleased that the government has pledged to work with First Nations, with the aboriginal community. I note that John Beaucage, the Anishinabek grand council chief, who is from Parry Sound–Muskoka, from the Wasauksing First Nation, was one of the presenters at committee. I know there were many aboriginal groups that made presentations, so I hope the government continues to work with those First Nations in the implementation of this bill.

I also note that our critic, Julia Munro, has worked tirelessly on this file many days at committee. We'll be hearing from her shortly when she has her hour-long presentation, the leadoff on third reading.

I was disappointed that the government did not respond or did not listen to the Ontario Ombudsman, André Marin, who was quite critical of this bill; he asked for oversight of the children's aid society. I note from my own personal experience at the constituency level that it can be very frustrating trying to assist constituents who are having problems with the CAS, and it seemed like a reasonable request that the Ombudsman might play a role in overseeing and dealing with problems with the children's aid society.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I spoke on this bill in second reading, and I'm pleased to join in the debate

this afternoon just to focus on some concerns that I don't think were appropriately dealt with during the course of the public hearings.

Let me deal with First Nations first. If you look at the list of both people who made actual presentations before the committee and groups and organizations that provided written submissions, there were many, many individual First Nation communities and also political organizations that appeared or made written submissions because they were not adequately or appropriately consulted about the development of this bill. That also happened with respect to Bill 36, the LHIN legislation, and we heard very clearly from First Nations during the course of that process as well.

I gather that some of the recommendations that came forward during the course of the public hearings were adopted by the government. Others were put forward by our critic, Ms. Horwath. But the fact remains that for a government that claims they've got a new relationship with aboriginal people, that new relationship sure has gotten off to a very rocky start. We heard criticisms from political organizations and individual First Nations on both this bill and Bill 36, and the government would be very wise, if they are going to give any meaning at all to their statement about having a new political relationship, to actually start to involve and consult and have input from First Nations before introducing legislation.

Secondly, I'm very concerned that the government didn't accept the amendment to have the Ombudsman have oversight with respect to children's aid societies. I think that's a very appropriate role and responsibility for the Ombudsman of Ontario to have and I regret that the government would not accept that amendment as put forward by us.

I just want to say that I'm very concerned about financial resources. I know they don't appear in the bill, but I can tell you that our own children's aid society has enough of a time and dedication of human and financial resources just dealing with protection issues. If we are going to have adoptions work in the province of Ontario, there's going to have to be a significant investment on the adoption side in many of these agencies, because they just don't have the funds right now to make that happen. I'll be interested to see what kind of funding is going to be provided.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London–Fanshawe): Thank you for giving me this opportunity to stand up and speak in support of Bill 210. I had a chance to serve on the social policy committee and I listened to many people from across the province of Ontario submit their presentations and talk about this bill.

I want to congratulate the minister for bringing this beautiful and incredible transformation of child care services in this province, because, as you know, our children are our future. If we don't look after them at the present time, we're not going to have a bright and strong future.

This bill will make adoption very flexible, to find a home for those children who are looking for peace and

tranquillity and finding a family that can look after them and help them to grow and become stronger and become the future of this province.

1610

I think this bill is very important, and makes it easier to include the grandparents and family members to be a part of the adoption system in this province.

I had the chance to have lunch today with a friend of mine who has been trying for a long time to adopt her nephew. But due to the old bill, the issue is very complicated. It's not easy. It's very complex. That's why this bill will make all the adoption system easier, especially for a member of the family to be taking charge of loved ones in their family.

Also, we listened to many aboriginal people from across the province, and I met with them in my office. I think the ministry and the minister met with them on a regular basis and also looked after their needs. Hopefully, this bill will look after the needs of everyone in Ontario, whether aboriginal or a person who lives in the north or the west or the east or Toronto. This bill is very important, not just for one particular group but for every child in this province. It's about time. I want to congratulate the minister again for her hard work in bringing this bill forward.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to participate. I concur with my friend from—what's the riding, Norm?

Mr. Miller: Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Mr. Runciman: —Parry Sound–Muskoka, a very knowledgeable member who participates in virtually every matter of business before the Legislature. We compliment him on that.

Referencing some of the discussion that has occurred related to this issue and the legislation itself, but the issue generally with respect to adoption, I know that my colleague Mr. Jackson from Burlington, who has been a strong advocate in terms of protection of children in this province, has raised a number of issues surrounding the legislation, a number of issues and questions surrounding the intent here. I know that he has raised the issue of the legislation being essentially a cost-containment strategy and not a child welfare outcomes issue.

I think there is an indication that when it comes to a vote the Progressive Conservative opposition will be supporting the bill, but I think we have a significant number of concerns that the critic will be putting on the record, which hopefully the minister and her colleagues will pay heed to and at some point perhaps consider changes. Our member Ms. Munro has talked about a sunset review, which I'm not sure has been accepted by the government. It's difficult to comprehend the rationale behind a refusal to accept that kind of comprehensive review and indeed to see just what impact this legislation is having.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time available for questions and comments. I'll return to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. You have two minutes to reply.

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: I'm pleased to comment on what has been said by my four colleagues here in the House. I certainly appreciate and want to emphasize the importance of their contributions.

On the matter of financial resources for children's aid societies, I guess I'm not really all that good at marketing what we do. So I should say at this point that while children's aid societies have basically experienced something in the order of about a 200% increase over the last eight years, we recognize that they do require more financial resources. To that extent, we did commit an additional \$34.7 million to them a few months ago, which they appreciated. We recognize that even as we reform the system we need to provide financial support to stabilize the system.

On the subject of the aboriginal community, there is no question that we take the needs of our aboriginal families, aboriginal leaders, people on the ground, off reserve and on reserve, very seriously. I think if you were to ask them about my commitment, they would have to share with you very positively my firm commitment to addressing their needs.

In terms of the Ombudsman, when Bill 210 came forward for second reading, the Ombudsman did not have a role. The Ombudsman will have a role with the proposed amendments that have come forward, and it's a very important role.

I also want to recognize that the amendment that was brought forward by Ms. Munro for a sunset was a very valid and thoughtful amendment, and this bill will be—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. Further debate.

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): I'm pleased to be able to join the third reading debate on Bill 210, the Child and Family Services Statute Law Amendment Act. I think everyone agrees that protecting our children is the number one priority for any government or party.

We read in the papers and see on television so many cases of children abused or neglected. The children's aid societies and other child welfare agencies need all the support, funding and powers necessary to protect children. In a public survey, the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies found that while 85% of the public would report child abuse, only 46% would report suspected child abuse. Ontarians need to know that they have an ethical duty and, in many cases, a legal obligation to report suspected child abuse. Child protection is not just a job for social workers or police; it is a duty for everyone, every individual. We all know of horrendous cases of abuse that have taken place in our province. Though I know that no system of protection is foolproof, we must learn from the mistakes made in individual cases to make sure it never happens again.

The standard refrain we hear when talking about child protection is "the best interests of the child." We all know that this includes protecting children from emotional, sexual or physical abuse. In 2000 we expanded the legislation to include neglect. We must also ensure that, in any legislation, we protect a child's need for stability

and certainty. The right of any child to a share of happiness and safety is paramount.

I want to take a moment to look at the aims that these reforms would have. They fall into three key areas. The first one is permanency planning for children, which simply means that the sooner a child can benefit from a permanent, stable family life and relationship, obviously the better. The second is the question of openness in adoption. The third is alternative dispute resolution, which I'll refer to later.

The aim of these reforms is, again, to expand the range of permanent, family-based care options for children in Ontario. It's also to enable more children to move on to adoption, and to reduce the court delay and divert cases where appropriate. One of the things we're all very much aware of is the kind of lengthy time that is taken up with the court process, and, obviously, looking at specific parts of this legislation designed to reduce that court delay.

The proposed changes would mean that a child could maintain ties to his or her family, community and culture and still be adopted or placed in a permanent home. The new funding framework is intended to place a greater emphasis on specific results for individual children and allow children's aid societies more options when they respond to new cases, matching their level of response to the need of the child. The legislation also proposes more extensive use of mediation instead of courts in child protection matters.

1620

Every one of these aims is one that I think everyone in this House could and should support. The only questions we need to ask ourselves are, does the bill meet the test of effectiveness, and will it fulfill the aims that the government intends to meet?

I'd like to take a moment just to look back over the last 10 years, certainly in the time that I've served in this House, to give some background about the child welfare system. Between 1991 and 1996, six inquests studied the deaths of 10 children. The inquests highlighted for the government that improvements to the child protection system were desperately needed. In 1997, the Ontario Child Mortality Task Force also made detailed suggestions concerning the tools and resources available to front-line workers, their training and the legislative base for child protection.

Following this, our government appointed an expert panel headed by Judge Mary Jane Hatton. The panel told us there should be a better balance in the legislation between the interests of families and children. The panel recommended we make it clear that the paramount purpose of the act is to promote the best interests, protection and well-being of children.

The former PC government considered their input and their recommendations very carefully and developed legislation to better protect children. These amendments addressed those changes most urgently needed to ensure the safety of children. Introduced in 1999, our significant changes to the Child and Family Services Act were

proclaimed on March 31, 2000. Our changes made it clear that the paramount purpose of the Child and Family Services Act was to promote the best interests, protection and well-being of children. Our changes expanded the reasons for finding a child in need of protection. For instance, the word "neglect" was specifically included and the threshold for risk of physical and emotional harm to children was lowered. This has encouraged earlier action to protect children at risk.

These changes also allowed evidence of a parent's past conduct towards children to be used in child protection court proceedings. Our changes clarified the duty of professionals and the public to report that a child is or may be in need of protection, to encourage more reporting of suspected abuse and neglect. Our changes made it easier for children's aid societies to get the information they need to protect children. Our changes promoted earlier and more decisive planning for children's futures so that permanent arrangements for children could be achieved as soon as possible. They also ensured that access by relatives or other individuals to children who have been made crown wards is granted only if it is beneficial to the child. We also provided for a mandatory review of the Child and Family Services Act at least every five years.

Our government also committed the funds necessary to better protect children. Changing the law is not enough; we must always ensure that the funds and staff are available to protect children. Between 1995 and 2003, we increased funding to children's aid societies to over \$1 billion, an increase of 185% since 1995. Between 1995 and 2003, we hired 1,800 more child protection workers, almost a 69% increase. As of December 31, 2002, approximately 7,700 children's aid society staff had been trained under the Ontario child protection training program. I'm very proud of the changes and improvements that our government made. We made a difference when it came to protecting our children.

Our legal and funding changes received widespread support among child welfare experts and the media. Mary McConville, executive director of the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, said, about our legislative changes, "These amendments represent a profound change in child protection legislation, and they are strongly supported by every children's aid society we represent."

Dr. James Cairns, deputy chief coroner, said, "With these changes, Ontario will take a huge step forward in its fight against child abuse and neglect."

A February 16, 2001, thumbs-up editorial in the London Free Press lauded the PC government's reforms: "Queen's Park's overhaul of child protection laws and its commitment of money to keep kids out of harm's way is winning kudos in surprising areas, such as social services circles: The greater emphasis on protecting children in risky arrangements has meant rising caseloads for children's aid societies. The money is following up—spending in this area has jumped by over 100% over the last five years."

Bob Penney, the executive director of the Kawartha-Haliburton Children's Aid Society, said, in the *Lindsay Daily Post* on February 16, 2001, "The province made a commitment to the child welfare system, and I have to give them credit in responding to it. The government's response to child welfare has been incredible. This government has done more than any other government."

This view of our PC government changes has been sustained over the last five years. A report published by the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies just this year strongly supported the 2000 changes: "Amendments to the Child and Family Services Act in March 2000 represented a significant contribution to the enhanced protection of children. The legislative amendments, in combination with the implementation of the Ontario risk assessment model, initiated changes that were broadly welcomed by the child welfare sector. The new provisions lowered the threshold of intervention in terms of neglect and sought to ensure earlier resolutions, particularly for younger children."

I think it's important to do that bit of history, because certainly there is some concern over the kinds of promises that this government has made with regard to children's issues. The one that comes to mind is the campaign promise of the Premier in offering full treatment for autistic children, and of course this promise was broken. Dalton McGuinty promised full autism treatment. He promised "the support and treatment they need. That includes children over the age of six." In March of last year, the promise was broken by the children's minister of the day. Now the courts have ruled against the McGuinty government for violating the Education Act by not providing autism treatment beyond age six. Ending the clawback of the child tax credit was another McGuinty promise, and this was broken.

I point out these Liberal broken promises as a warning to members of the House, to child welfare agencies and to children in need. They need to know that the Liberals have not always lived up to the promises they've made in this category, and under the McGuinty Liberals, children's aid societies face combined deficits of about \$70 million, with no plan by the government to deal with this issue.

1630

I'd like to turn now to some of the key elements and provisions of this bill, and in particular to offer some of the words of the presenters to the committee, what they had to say about some of these issues. I'm going to deal with the issue around places of safety, the issue around kinship and community care, the alternative dispute resolution mechanism, native issues, the appeal process, openness agreements and adoption itself.

First, then, a presentation that was provided to us by the Ontario Association of Residences Treating Youth. This presentation, I think, outlines very clearly the high standards that are needed to define a place of safety for children or youth coming into care. I quote:

"Being on the front lines, our members understand that situations often arise which require the immediate

placement of a child in a 'place of safety.' We have always worked hand in hand with the local children's aid societies to find safe homes for children in need of protection on an urgent basis.

"The act, which will now explicitly contemplate using a relative, extended family or 'local community' on a more regular basis, brings with it different challenges than using, for example, a foster home which has already passed the reviews for being a safe place for the child to be."

Mr. Moore goes on: "This could now mean that for many children, they will not necessarily be in the direct care of a CAS, but will be placed in an alternative place of safety with a relative, neighbour etc.

"The proposed changes to the act mention the use of 'prescribed procedures' in determining a place of safety. In our view, a place of safety must be determined with care and scrutiny.

"Our experience leads us to recommend that at a minimum, this should be the same as the requirements for a foster home. However, based on our conversations with the ministry, we understand the practical application of this section of the act and accompanying regulations is to enable it to be used quickly, in situations where immediate intervention is required, the child is required to be removed from an unsafe situation, and to provide a place of safety in the period prior to the first court hearing.

"It is critical to recognize that CASs already have access to numerous existing and approved places of safety provided by existing licensed foster care and group home beds. Foster care and group home agencies have always and will continue to have short-term emergency placements that meet CAS needs—we partner with them regularly to meet those emergency needs, and we provide a high standard of care in safe environments.

"The government's policy goal of 'kinship' care is leading down a road for this type of care to be used on a much broader basis than in the past. It may appear on the surface to be cheaper to follow this path, but the reality is that many of the children taken into protection have problems that need a higher level of care and treatment and require a more sophisticated form of foster care or group treatment. The ultimate goal must be giving these children and youth the best chance at being productive members of our society.

"While using relatives or a 'community' is a laudable goal, in many cases the solution is much more complex than simply placing a child with a relative for care. The expansion in the use of kinship care may be used for a short period of time, or may become the longer-term home of the child. We understand the proposed regulations will be used to develop a standard of care for ensuring the child is going to a place of safety in the interim period if, for example, the place of safety is one which has not been used in the past.

"It is important for the committee to recognize the balance required in weighing the child's safety and security against the perceived benefits of kinship care. There-

fore, a realistic assessment of the guardian's ability to keep the child safe and meet their treatment needs is required along with a realistic appraisal of the child's treatment needs, a plan to access appropriate services and the resources available to do so."

Mr. Moore continues, "The committee and the ministry should also consider a further definition of what and who 'community' means. We ask that the committee and the ministry ensure that this proposed change does not become a measure of convenient, less regulated placements that save dollars at the expense of the children in need of comprehensive care.

"In addition, ongoing children's aid society involvement and the legislated requirement of the ministry to monitor compliance of these places of safety is critical to protecting these children. The ministry must review all children's aid society placements, especially for those children who do not end up coming into care.

"All of us who participate in the child welfare system strive to achieve the same goals: a fair and just balance between the provision of high-quality care and treatment to the children and youth who need it and the need to contain escalating costs. There are many paths we can follow to arrive at our objectives, but we must ensure that none of these avenues leads to an imbalance favouring cost reductions over the needs of children and youth.

"The children's aid societies, as well as some other community agencies, are responsible for determining where a child is placed. One factor in doing this is the cost of the service the child needs. The budgets that children's aid societies and other placing agencies have to manage can constrain their decisions. While perhaps not a direct intention, this can compromise what the child needs and receives in treatment. For example, the child ends up being placed in a regular foster home when the professionals who have evaluated the child recommend placement in a treatment foster care program or for treatment in a residential group home. In this regard, particularly in light of the proposed expansion of the definition of 'places of safety,' it is critical to have a system for monitoring outcomes and the ability to review the appropriateness of where the child is being placed in order to meet their treatment goals."

1640

I think this submission certainly sums up the position that we recognize as being paramount, that while there are arguments we would agree with in terms of children being in a home where there is a relationship, the question, then, of whether it's the best home in terms of long-term or in terms of treatment is obviously a very significant one.

Kinship and community care is, again, very evident in this bill and I think a positive goal. We know that in many cases, if a father or a mother is unable to care for a child, the fact that the child could then go to a grandparent or an aunt or a cousin may certainly be best for the child. If we have a parent who has a drug addiction, giving custody to a family member may allow that child to experience the least possible upheaval. We must also

recognize that extended families already play a great part in raising a child, and it only makes sense, where appropriate, that we turn to them first in case of need.

Nevertheless, kinship care from a loving grandparent or relative can provide a healthy and familiar environment for a child. Reliance on the courts may also be reduced if we're looking at a system where the child is going to be put within the family circle. I think we all recognize the role of extended families, which play a part in the raising of every child, and so it seems to me that it only makes sense that we turn to them first in the case of need. But obviously the question of kinship care must be guarded very carefully because many abusive and neglectful parents in fact come from families in which these traits have been carried from one generation to another.

What we need to hear about and be comforted by, then, are the kinds of safeguards that would ensure that those kinds of processes will take place. I think an important contribution in the consultation process includes the words of Carolyn Buck of the Children's Aid Society of Toronto. She makes reference to the experience that the Toronto children's aid has had on kinship. She says:

"Our own kinship program, implemented in 2004, has taught us the precious value of extended families and how supportive and engaged they can become in the lives of their relative children and youth. We have placed about 100 children who have been in our care through our kinship program and believe they have enjoyed greater security, greater stability and predictability than they may have experienced in a foster care system."

Kristina Reitmeier of the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies told us an important fact in her submission:

"Currently, the only mechanisms available for placing a child with extended family are, first, to make the child a CAS ward and the family or community member a provisional foster home. This option has the attendant intrusion by the worker and the lack of autonomy by the family, as there are regulations for foster homes, and workers need to visit and to document things frequently. A second option is to place the child with family under a supervision order, but this can be for a maximum period of 12 months at a time, requiring returning to court prior to expiry for a status review. The third available option currently requires that the family members bring a second, separate court application for custody against the parent under a different statute."

I think you can see from this that there are some initiatives that speak to the benefits of the way in which this bill moves this issue forward, but obviously, as well, some considerations that the government must consider.

The next part of the bill that I'd like to refer to is again one on which a great deal of discussion has developed—much of the process of this will be done in regulation—and that, of course, is the alternative dispute resolution. I think it's probably—I don't know whether the minister would agree—one of the signature pieces of this legis-

lation. It certainly comes as a response to the many, many people, certainly whom I have met and talked to, who have experienced such frustration with the court process, and was certainly identified by those in the field in terms of being a very costly part of the whole children's aid services.

Alternative dispute resolution is used for areas as diverse as disputes between the forest industry and resource-based tourism, for the WSIB, and of course such issues as divorce. We all know that court time is very expensive for all parties concerned, and so we have to be assured that dispute resolution is in fact going to mean that it is more efficient and certainly less time-consuming than going to court. If it's seen as a precursor to going to court, then obviously it may not be quite as successful as we would want.

To again go to the words of Carolyn Buck of the children's aid society, "We are also very heartened to see that Bill 210, if passed, will promote the use of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms for problem resolution. Our own agency has approached many situations, including client complaint resolution, through employing such strategies. This is likely to be less adversarial for all parties, and more likely to result in better outcomes for children much sooner than we experience through litigation processes that are often protracted for several years through the courts."

Patricia Fenton of the Adoption Council of Ontario echoed some of the same sentiment when she said, "We also support the use of alternative dispute resolution methods as proposed, as we see this provides an opportunity to move the process out of an adversarial kind of arena and helps to avoid the lengthy disputes that may hold the child back from moving into a permanent family as quickly as possible. The proposed act acknowledges that this method of resolution can be used at various times throughout the child's life to vary openness orders as needs shift and change."

1650

John Dunn of the Foster Care Council of Canada outlined his concerns with dispute resolution in the way that follows:

"One thing I've learned about dispute resolution is that everything in dispute resolution is to be confidential and cannot be used in court. I don't know if that's the same with this proposed legislation or if this child welfare mediation process will be a little different, if it could somehow be customized, but as a former crown ward myself, one of the largest issues I have is confidentiality—not the fact that there's not enough confidentiality, but that there's too much. I've been trying for about five years, personally, to obtain copies of my own records from the children's aid society, the Catholic CAS in Toronto, and they've been refusing me from the start. They won't give me dentists' names, doctors' names, any of my medical records. So this is something that I think needs to be opened up."

Again, you can see from the variety of comments that have been made that there is certainly a recognition by all

of the presenters of the potential that alternative dispute resolution has as a mechanism. The important thing here is that much of what is surrounding this mechanism will, of course, be done through regulations, so it's very important that those considerations that have been outlined are addressed. It's certainly possible that it will do what it's supposed to do: be more effective and be more timely. That is one of the biggest issues, certainly, when we're looking at this process, as we should, from the point of view of the child.

We heard a lot about native concerns. Certainly, the keys there appeared to be summed up by two presentations. I will just quote Chief Arnold Gardner of the Grand Council Treaty No. 3 Nation: "Bill 210 will have significant impact on First Nation citizens and communities who are not part of the native child welfare agency." The second is by Deputy Grand Chief McCormick of the Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians, who told the committee, "There was only a short period of time in which the ministry invited comments, from January 21 to 31.... That's not considered consultation, as far as I know. We did have a Chiefs of Ontario resolution in 2004, which was passed on to the minister, requesting a separate consultation process." I would simply make reference to the minister's own comments today when she made reference to the fact that, as a result of much of the input in the committee process, there was, of course, more consultation that was done at this point.

The next issue I would like to deal with is the question of the appeal process. I don't think there's likely an MPP in the House who has not been approached by constituents who have found themselves to be in a position with a CAS of a complaint, some kind of frustration. I think it's partly because of the fact that when we're dealing with children, obviously emotions run high. The stakes are very high. These are children we're talking about. So I think the question of an appeal process is extremely important.

I'm very happy to see that in this bill as we are debating it today, the government has restored an appeal process for complaints about the children's aid services, and that extends outside the actual societies. It is certainly an important principle of appeals that there should be in almost all cases an avenue of appeal beyond the level of the allegedly offending agency, and so I think it's very important that this be done.

John Dunn of the Foster Care Council of Canada and a former crown ward of the Catholic Children's Aid Society had this to say: "The concerns I have are that with the original, the people had an opportunity to have their complaint heard by the independent board of directors of a children's aid society. Actually, I'd like to back up and speak to the fact that it says 'which shall be approved by a director.'"

This was, of course, before the government introduced its amendments, and as it is now, there is the Child and Family Services Review Board. But I think his comments are important to recognize that there was frustration with

the complaints procedure. I think it's important that the government has made this amendment. The amendments provide that the complaint review procedures to be followed by the societies upon the receipt of a complaint will be established by regulation, and if the complaint relates to certain specified matters, the decision of the society, made in accordance with the prescribed complaint review procedure, may be reviewed by the Child and Family Services Review Board.

The new section 68.1 provides that for other specified matters, the complaint may be made directly to the board or transferred to the board before the completion of the society's complaint review procedure. The amendments provide that a review by the board under section 68 or 68.1 be conducted in accordance with the specified requirements. I am happy to have this amendment. I had, in fact, prepared an amendment myself along the same lines, that a board have the kind of jurisdiction, and obviously on the basis of the government's amendment, I withdrew this.

The next area I would like to refer to in this bill that I think is, again, new ground is the question of openness agreements. I think these are going to be the source of a great deal of interest as the government puts this bill, if passed, into process, because the minister herself has made it very clear that this particular part of the legislation is seen as something that will encourage adoption. When you look at the statistic that there are 9,000 children who are part of the children's aid society and only 900 adoptions, it's a very startling figure to be given, so we need to be sure that the process by which any openness agreement can be done is one that in fact is going to encourage adoptions.

We're all aware that there are avenues in this province and in this country for people to choose alternative routes to adoption, so in one sense there is sort of a competition for those adoptive homes. The last thing we would want is to have it seen as a way that might impede, as opposed to encourage and increase, the adoptions.

Once again going to our presenters, their comments and experience are important as we look at the process.

Carolyn Buck of the Children's Aid Society of Toronto had this to say: "Our experience in the adoption department is that many adoptive parents are interested in being able to provide information about and sometimes contact with their adopted children's birth parents when they see that it is important for the child. Currently, the agency grapples with how to facilitate such information-sharing or contact after adoption without creating a legal problem for the parties. Legislation that creates a structure for openness orders or agreements will make it easier to do what is best for those children and adoptive families who want both a degree of openness and some legal certainty."

1700

Patricia Fenton of the Adoption Council of Ontario had this to say about the proposed changes. She supports Bill 210's proposed changes with respect to openness in adoption: "Too many children in Ontario are prevented

from moving on to adoption because of the access orders. Openness agreements or orders, when in the best interests of the child, contribute in a positive way to healthy development. They give the child the security of an adoptive family while at the same time respecting the importance of those established relationships and connections. I've certainly learned about the importance of that through my own daughter, who from as early an age as four had lots and lots of questions and even concerns about what was happening with her birth family. Particularly, she wanted to know about her birth mother."

Dr. Brenda Nutter of the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies told the committee that her organization "is not under the illusion that fully open adoption is possible for all children. We do believe that, somewhere along a continuum of openness options, there will be a place for many children to have some sort of contact with their birth relatives, but not for all. That is why it is so significant that, under this legislation, a crown wardship order must be obtained before an openness order can be made. Openness has not been conceived as a bargaining tool to entice parents into consenting to crown wardship. Openness cannot be guaranteed. That said, we do heartily support the development of a practice that allows the greatest amount of openness appropriate to the circumstances, and we applaud the fact that the nature of the contact can be defined through either an order or an agreement. In addition, we strongly support the fact that, under the provisions of Bill 210, the failure to implement openness provisions does not make an adoption order invalid."

Dr. Nutter goes on to say: "This legislation will require a substantial commitment by the government to the education of the public and of those in the field who will be charged with the implementation of Bill 210. It changes the face of public adoption. It is true that more children will receive better service through permanency initiatives. In addition, in-care costs will be reduced. But as this process moves ahead, it is important that the needs of adoptive families be recognized and fully supported as they manage the ever-changing needs of their older and special-needs children. In the public sector, we believe that the expansion of post-adoption services is a critical part of the infrastructure that will allow the openness provisions of Bill 210 to be successfully implemented."

James Dubray of the Durham Children's Aid Society told the committee about that children's aid society's experience with openness as follows: "In the past year, we have been piloting open adoption. Our experiences generally have not been positive. We have learned that in the making of and having agreements in place for adoption placement, the natural family sometimes have changed their minds with regard to the adoption placement and have sought to have it overturned by using the provisions of the Children's Law Reform Act. The Superior Court justice has agreed to hear the matter in September and is currently deliberating and deferring her decision on which act has primacy.

"If the justice rules that the application has merit and can proceed, there is a good chance that the adoption

placement can be overturned using the provisions of the Children's Law Reform Act. Needless to say, other counsel are watching this process very carefully, and if a door is opened to allow provisions of the Child and Family Services Act to be assailed by another piece of provincial legislation, we may find ourselves in a bit of a legal quagmire with respect to child protection and adoption proceedings."

Dubray tells us that "there needs to be a strong signal in the legislation that child protection and adoption matters are not subject to review by the Children's Law Reform Act."

Looking at the spectrum of conversation and deputants we heard in the committee, I think, sends a very strong signal to the government with regard to those regulations and with regard to the sensitivities around embarking on the openness order.

I want to take a few minutes to look at the question of issues around adoption. A moment ago I mentioned 900 adoptions, 9,000 children in care and the importance of looking at these mechanisms with the goal in mind of increasing the number of children who will benefit from a permanency they currently don't have.

Carolyn Buck of the Children's Aid Society of Toronto made reference to the issues around adoption. She said, "Our agency in Toronto serves over 33,000 children a year. Given that our agency alone provides daily care for about 1,000 crown wards, we are optimistic that Bill 210 will promote permanency options which have been heretofore unavailable for the vast majority of those children and youth. This has been in large measure due to approximately 75% of crown wardship orders being accompanied by an access order. Current adoption legislation prohibits crown wards with access orders being placed for adoption. Simply put, this group of children and youth have had the option for adoption eliminated from their future. Bill 210 will create much greater opportunity for those children and youth and will move us legally toward what most of society has already accepted through the formation of blended or reconstituted families, shared parenting and joint custody."

The important thing here in terms of the process is the attempt to increase the rate of adoptions of crown wards. The government and many agencies have said that allowing openness agreements will increase the rate of adoptions. I want to make sure that openness agreements will not have the opposite effect. If we look at the range of comments and advice that has been provided, there's an opportunity to step very carefully and make sure that children's aid societies and the government are able to ensure that openness agreements in fact do not discourage adoption.

In committee, in clause by clause, I offered an amendment that would have required the government and the societies to be accountable for increasing the rate of adoption. My amendment would have required a three-year review of the effectiveness of openness agreements and whether or not the rates of adoption have increased. Unfortunately, the government members chose to vote

down my amendment. Obviously, I wish they had accepted it, as it would have mandated this specific area of accountability for increasing the adoption of crown wards. As we know, there is a process for a five-year review, but when you're looking at stepping into what in many ways are uncharted waters, I think it's important that the government look at specifically how effective this process has been.

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Let me just conclude by saying that obviously protecting children and giving them the certainty and the stability of permanency is the most important priority, certainly for our caucus and, I know, for all members of the House. Bill 210 contains a number of positive measures that, if they work, will protect more children and help them get care and get into safer situations.

Greater involvement for extended families through kinship care is really a good step. Community involvement can be very helpful, but it mustn't get in the way of giving kids permanency.

Alternative dispute resolution will be positive, but we must review it constantly to ensure that cost savings do not outweigh child protection.

Openness agreements are projected to assist in increasing the rates of adoption, but the government must ensure that the policy meets the expectation and is not a legal quagmire, as I spoke about earlier.

Adoptive families need the security of knowing an adoption is absolute. If they don't have this sense of security, they won't adopt.

I think that while, obviously, there are certain limitations and certain things that we're not going to know about until the regulations come out, the importance here is that we can never lose sight of the fact that it is the needs of children that are paramount and that we must always be looking at ways to develop that legal and physical framework that ensures that our children are taken care of in the absolutely best way possible.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): It's my pleasure to make a few comments on the debate, particularly the issues brought forward by the member from York North. I have to say that a lot of what the member had to say reminds me of an old term that we used to use at the municipal level of government: WIP, which was a work in progress. I think that's pretty much what can be used to describe the cautions and the concerns that were raised by the member from York North.

I think it was appropriate that she made some of her initial remarks around the history of this legislation and the history of the whole system of child protection, but also made some really important comments around resources for children's aid societies to be able to undertake some of the new systems that are being put in place; the monitoring and checks and balances as we move forward in the implementation of the changes that the minister has brought forward in this bill; the paramount concern always of the well-being of children in Ontario; and also particularly the way that perhaps kinship care is

one of the issues that we would all agree will help in terms of making sure that those children are being cared for appropriately, but also we may need to keep the checks and balances in place. Also, alternative dispute resolution was raised.

I wanted to make a point about some of the concerns that were raised by one of the presenters, OAITH, the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses. One of the things they want to see is domestic violence screening to be incorporated in the process because of the power imbalances and the manipulations that can occur in families where there is a history of family violence.

Nonetheless, I think the caution around policy meeting expectation is a good one, and I look forward to what the future brings in terms of changes to the child welfare system.

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I am pleased to rise to talk about Bill 210, our government's child protection legislation, which is before us today for third reading. Bill 210 will make adoption more flexible, create more legal options beyond adoption and make the process consistent for adoptive parents by simplifying the application process.

Minister Chambers has worked very closely with the aboriginal community to develop legislation that would allow more aboriginal children and youth to stay in their communities. The minister followed through on a commitment to address their concerns and has held many meetings with members of our First Nations communities from across Ontario on Bill 210. In fact, when I became the PA back in November, one of my first meetings was with a group of chiefs, and I was impressed with how eloquent, how thoughtful and how practical their solutions were to amending the bill. I think we have included many of their suggestions. I think it's a much stronger bill.

We learned that aboriginal children are disproportionately represented in our child protection system. This is a trend that clearly should not continue. Under the current system, aboriginal children who come into the care of a children's aid society are often placed in non-aboriginal foster care placements. With an emphasis on customary care, we're going to work with aboriginal leaders to build capacity so children can stay in their communities and maintain important cultural and family ties as well as incorporate First Nations traditions into their upbringing.

As well, we've broadened the definition of "extended family" to include any members of a child's band or native community. This new definition of community would encompass any person with an ethnic or cultural tie with a child or parent or sibling of that child.

I'm very pleased to rise to talk about Bill 210. I think this is a good bill. We've made some important changes, and I think it's going to be much better for all the children in Ontario.

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm certainly pleased to join the debate and comment on the remarks made by the member from York North. It's

certainly an area that doesn't go by every day in terms of dealing with the protection of children. This is a file that obviously was handed off to the current minister from the previous one, who did a lot of work on it.

I will say this from a legal perspective: When the member from Hamilton East says that this is a work in progress, let's be honest. We're dealing with life and the day to day, in terms of trying to bring in measures, checks and balances, trying to bring in protection. Quite frankly, when we say that it's a work in progress, it's something where all we can try to do is the best we can, one step at a time. Things change, but the solution to this is something that has to evolve as society changes. This bill, even when it is brought forth, may be out of date by the time we're dealing with the situations we have to deal with: the changes that are necessary under the Criminal Code and the changes that are necessary under the children's aid society.

I have, as an MPP over the last 10 and a half years, dealt with a number of situations that are very troubling. The inadequacy of the children's aid society, in terms of dealing with it from a practical point of view—with no blame on their part, but from a resources point of view, in terms of whether they can even deal with the situation—is troubling. Certainly, the breakup of a family, the protection of a child, is something that concerns all of us here in the Legislature. Our party, as the member from Leeds-Grenville has indicated, is supportive, but certainly there's more work that needs to be done.

Ms. Martel: I want to thank the member from York North for the comments she made. She did talk about financial resources and the implications with respect to this bill. I want to focus on this again. I'm going to harp on this one more time because I've had some discussions with our own children's aid society about their obligations and responsibilities and the concern they have expressed to me about their ability to undertake the additional responsibilities, as legitimate as they are, that come from this bill with the budget they have in place. We had this discussion even before this government introduced this legislation.

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I have a good working relationship with our children's aid society. We meet on a regular basis to discuss concerns they have, and long before this bill came forward, the executive director had expressed to me his concern that overwhelmingly the financial and human resources of this children's aid society in our community were focused on child protection. That was as a result of legislation that had been passed by the previous Conservative government, but he felt very strongly that that left quite a gap with respect to their ability to undertake adoptions and that very few of their staff were actually doing work around adoptions because so much of their work, responsibility and reporting ended up ensuring that so much of their human resources, in particular, were focused on trying to deal with legislation that the Conservatives had brought in.

We all want this legislation to work, but we really need to get a handle on what the fairly significant

financial implications are. Is the government going to be in a position and prepared to ensure that children's aid societies have those resources to make sure that this bill can be dealt with at the local level in the way the government and, I think, all of us want it to be dealt with? Yes, I want to see more of those children who are in care actually be adopted. The question is, are children's aid societies going to have the financial resources to allow the staff to make that happen?

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time available for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for York North. You have two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Munro: I certainly want to thank the members for Hamilton East, Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, Brampton Centre and Nickel Belt. I think that the notion of a work in progress is a really good one, because I did make reference to the regulatory responsibilities that flow out of this piece of legislation.

The member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford also talked about the importance of the fact that child protection and societal changes are ongoing. So as we look to provide—this is like a snapshot of a point in time—you have to be ready for the fact that circumstances, the kinds of issues that come to the fore, demand our attention. That's an ongoing issue change.

Along with that issue, the member for Nickel Belt raised the importance of funding and the need for protection, the need for training and even for the technology to be able to implement this bill. Those are all things that, I think rightly, the member for Nickel Belt has identified as issues around funding that are extremely important.

We certainly would look forward to this bill moving along and, as people are working with it, it will be everyone's hope that it will meet its goals.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Horwath: It's my pleasure to have an opportunity to talk to Bill 210, the Child and Family Services Statute Law Amendment Act. We've already heard from previous speakers this afternoon that this is a bill that tries to change the way the child protection system in Ontario operates currently. Some people tuning in, not having perhaps had a chance to listen to any of the previous discussion, will wonder, "Why the heck do we need to do this in the first place? What's the issue?"

I know the minister did some of that in her opening remarks, appropriately, but I wanted to reiterate, for those people who may have just joined us, why it's important that we continuously look at the child protection system and try to make sure we are doing the right thing by children in Ontario.

According to some of the figures that the government provided in its documentation in the preparation of this bill, Ontario has about 9,000 crown wards. Those are children who are wards of the state, or crown wards. In other jurisdictions they're called wards of the state; in our jurisdiction they're called crown wards. These are children who have been taken into protection or into care by

government. In the case of Ontario, fewer than 10% of these children are successfully adopted each year. Only 900 children were adopted in 2004, and 882 crown wards the year before that. Fewer than 10% of the total are adopted.

Why is that, people wonder, particularly when you juxtapose that against stats from the Adoption Council of Ontario that say the number of international adoptions has climbed to about 600 a year, while private agencies in Ontario have placed a mere 170 children with families?

Currently, the rules that exist—prior to this bill being brought forward—prevent children in the care of children's aid societies, whose birth families have a court-ordered right to visit or contact them, from being adopted. So there's a barrier in place as part of the system, as part of the rules. If there's anything on record where the birth parents or families have a right to contact in any way—and that could be anything as minor as a Christmas card or a birthday card—this is the barrier that prevents those children from being adopted. So the existing system definitely has been in need of overhaul as it does in fact prevent about three quarters of Ontario's estimated 9,000 crown wards from even being considered for adoption. That's the kind of system that was being looked at that needed the overhaul and that led to this legislation coming forward.

Studies have shown that crown wards also move from foster care and group homes every 22 months on average and suffer many changes in social workers. This causes destabilization for those children. There are also other jurisdictions in Canada that I believe the government has looked to to review openness in adoption, which again has been raised by other speakers in this debate. These are some of the issues that Bill 210 was brought forward to try to address.

I think it's important to note that, although today we're in third reading of this bill, we didn't get here by an easy process. In fact, when we look at what happened at the very beginning, after first reading and then leading up to second reading of the bill, it became very clear that the government was in a process of consultation that was leaving out a number of key stakeholders. As we began to prepare for second reading and then for the process of committee hearings, it became very clear to us that the government had not done its homework in terms of assuring all stakeholders a voice in the process.

When I say that, I specifically speak to the lack of consultation with First Nations communities, with the governance of our aboriginal communities across the province. I don't say that lightly, and I don't say that with any malice except that I was shocked, because one of the things we do is try to get hold of people who will be affected by various pieces of legislation coming forward from the government and just touch base. "Do you know there's this legislation coming down the pike? Do you know that it's likely getting close to the public hearings stage? Have you been participating in the discussion?" I can recall the second reading debate. The minister was

quite clear that she felt she had extensively consulted. Well, we found out that in fact that hadn't been the case. As a result, we spent some time talking to First Nations communities about how they felt about the process of consultation up to that point, and there were a number of things. One of the issues they raised broadly was the consultation process. The others were a number of actual substantive pieces to the bill that they thought needed to be changed to address some of their concerns.

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I was surprised that when the government was going to set up the actual committee hearings for this bill, they were going to turn it over in a matter of a week, set up two days for hearings without barely any notice for communities, and expect people from far-reaching, remote communes to come and speak to the bill. So I immediately, in the subcommittee meetings, began to advocate for a bit of a slowdown and a way to ensure that we could at least find out whether particularly First Nations communities were having an opportunity to participate in the public hearings. Of course, we were surprised that they weren't. In fact, if you look at the list of First Nations communities that actually did eventually, in one way or another, comment on this bill, it is extensive.

There are something like 134 First Nations in Ontario, and you will see that a large number of them eventually did participate. But I can tell you it wasn't because there was a keen interest initially in terms of the government making sure that that voice was being heard and that those government-to-government discussions were taking place between the governance of First Nations and the government of Ontario; in fact, it wasn't. But we were able to convince subcommittee members—government and opposition—that they needed to take a step back and make sure that the process was open and accessible to First Nations communities. Interestingly enough, we ended up in a situation where my understanding is that First Nations did eventually feel at least that they had some opportunity to voice some of their concerns in the process.

I wanted to quote from a document that was submitted by Chief Shining Turtle, Sturgeon clan, Whitefish River First Nation. A very similar passage is continued in many of the initial flags that were raised, if you will, or concerns that were brought forward by First Nations communities in regard to the initial raising of Bill 210 in this Legislature. It says, "As the bill affects First Nation rights and interests, the government of Ontario is under a legal obligation to consult First Nations and attempt to accommodate those rights and interests. This legal duty flows, in part, from section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. Further, section 2.2 of the 1965 welfare agreement, to which Ontario is signatory, requires First Nation consent before any significant alteration to a welfare program, including child welfare. The effect of section 2.2 was confirmed by the courts in the Mushkegowuk decision dealing with Ontario Works."

This letter was dated December 1, so it was prior to the hearings being put in place but after they had learned

that the government was not intending initially to provide an opportunity for them to speak to the bill. It's interesting, because initially the committee set two dates in the first week of December—I think it was December 5 and 6—and we found out afterwards, after the fact, that there was a major conference going on that First Nations communities were involved with in the province, and even had they wanted to make it, with a week's notice, down to Toronto to participate, they weren't able to because many of them were otherwise engaged in this other commitment. I think it's important to note that we did successfully get the government to agree to two more days of committee hearings, and they were very positive because, as I'm sure the minister stated in her remarks and will continue to indicate as she moves into implementation phases, a number of the amendments that First Nations communities were looking for were accommodated in some way or another; not in their fullness, because New Democrats brought a number of amendments to try to reflect First Nations concerns, and some of them were implemented by the government, but not all.

In terms of the committee's schedule again, this is from another First Nation piece of correspondence. It's from M'Chigeeng First Nation and it says: "The consultation problem with Bill 210 has been made worse by the committee hearing schedule. Only two days of hearing have been scheduled next week, for December 5 and 6. This does not give First Nations enough time to prepare presentations. To make matters worse, most First Nation leaders will be in Ottawa all of that week attending an important Assembly of First Nations conference dealing with the implications of the recent first ministers' meeting."

It goes on: "In the circumstances, we hereby urge the committee to reschedule the hearings to December 12 and 13." As we know, in fact there were two sets of committee hearings as a result of the large and extensive outcry from First Nations about the lack of consultation and their lack of ability to participate in a meaningful way in the development of the bill and in the public hearings process.

Having said that, this is not to say that there had been no consultation at all from those quarters. In fact, my understanding is that to some extent, the institutions, if you will, the First Nations service providers, were in some ways consulted by the government. Having said that, there is a specific requirement—and I've read it already—that government needs to talk to government when it comes to First Nations issues, and that's what this government forgot to do. In fact, they forgot to do it again with LHINs. I think my colleague from Nickel Belt has already raised in questions and comments that in fact LHINs is another piece of legislation where the government has done the wrong thing in terms of consultation with First Nations. Interestingly enough, I think perhaps the Minister of Health should consult with the Minister of Children and Youth Services, because it seems to me that she has at least been able to repair some of the damage

that was initially done by having ongoing discussions and making commitments to continuing the dialogue and the discussion with First Nations. I would advise the Minister of Health to take a page out of that book, because it seems to be one that's been received well in many ways by First Nations communities.

One of the things, although raised, that I'm not sure has actually been addressed in the bill, only because the scope of the bill doesn't allow it to be addressed, was an issue that First Nations service providers were raising back in August, and that was the designation process for premanded agencies. Again, this is something that comes from Betty Kennedy, executive director of the Association of Native and Child Family Services Agencies of Ontario, and I thought it was important. I raised it in second reading debate and thought I should raise it again, because it's still an outstanding issue and I think it's important to put it on the record. What she says is, "We would like this process"—this is the process related to the designation of premanded agencies—"to be clearly identified and would welcome receipt of all criteria for each stage in the designation process as well as the specified timelines in order to assist our member agencies more effectively. A number of them have identified significant delays in moving through this process and have requested our assistance in determining why these delays are occurring."

I raise this in the context of some of the previous discussion around resources that are going to be necessary to make this bill effective and to make the transformation, if you will, of child protection more effective in the province of Ontario, and in this case for First Nations communities. I know this issue has been raised by the member for Timmins—James Bay. He has raised a couple of times that there is frustration around the designation process and that if you can't get the agencies designated, then you can't get the services provided in some of the remote communities. That's certainly one of the things that we need to look at in terms of moving the agenda forward.

There are another couple of issues around some of the substantive things that were raised by First Nations communities. A lot of their concerns were around resourcing and how the systems currently are not effective in the way that they're being implemented in First Nations communities. Also, there is concern around the extent to which, because of lack of resources and because of lack of support for the efforts that are occurring in some more remote communities, there's a great deal of staff turnover. There's a great deal of difficulty in keeping staff in the agencies who are up to speed, skilled and can provide some continuity in terms of the child protection system. Likewise, there were some issues raised around the extent to which other types of professional resources can be utilized appropriately in those communities. One of the examples that I was given on a one-on-one basis after some of the hearings was the situation where you couldn't get a lawyer to advocate on behalf of children or you couldn't get a children's lawyer to participate in the process because they were not pre-

pared to attend in remote communities as was required. I don't think the issue was so much any kind of change to the system that would make it not necessary for there to be a children's lawyer, but rather that the resources need to be put into the system to ensure that there is fair access to the services that the rest of the children of Ontario can expect and would want to see in this legislation. I thought it was important to put those issues on the table, because until we start acknowledging that there's a lot more work to do, we're certainly not going to be in a position to say that we've taken the appropriate steps and we've listened well to the concerns of First Nations communities.

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Last but not least, the First Nations did come up with a specific resolution in regard to this bill. I'm just trying to find it in my notes, because I thought it was important to read it into the record. What this resolution does is basically say that notwithstanding some of the concerns that they've had with the bill—I'm going to read it to you. It was a resolution that was approved back about two weeks ago. It's "First Nation Child Welfare—Resolution 06/17." It says:

"Whereas the inherent right to self-government includes jurisdiction in relation to the protection of First Nations children;

"Whereas Bill 210, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act, abrogates the responsibilities of both the federal and provincial governments;

"Whereas the chiefs in assembly, through AOCC resolutions 05/22 and 05/27, opposed and rejected Bill 210 in its entirety, and in particular, a provision that would permit the Ontario government to arbitrarily redefine First Nation customary care practices in the vital area of child welfare;

"Whereas AOCC resolution 05/22 mandated the creation of a Chiefs Committee on Child Welfare to address and advance First Nations authority and jurisdiction in child welfare;

"Whereas AOCC resolution 05/27 directed the development of a separate consultation process to review and provide recommendations on the proposed legislative amendments to the Child and Family Services Act;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the chiefs in assembly, acknowledge the progress made to date by the Chiefs Committee on Child Welfare, the social services coordination unit and the Association of Native Child and Family Services Agencies (mandated and premanded) regarding amendments to Bill 210;

"Further be it resolved that we acknowledge the minimal amendments to Bill 210 as an interim measure, while supporting a comprehensive review of the CFSA in its entirety towards the development of a First Nation child welfare law;

"Further be it resolved that we direct the Chiefs Committee on Child Welfare to continue to advocate for our inherent right to care for and to provide culturally appropriate protection services for our children and families;

"Finally be it resolved that we, the chiefs in assembly, direct the Chiefs Committee on Child Welfare to

advocate for the designation of more native child welfare agencies across the province.”

That was moved by Chief Randall Phillips, Oneida Nation of the Thames, and seconded by Barney Anderson, by proxy, Wabauskang First Nation.

This resolution indicates a number of things: first of all, the extreme disappointment that the First Nations communities had with the initial process of Bill 210; the acknowledgment that the government took some time, the minister took some time, to try to incorporate some of their concerns and to kind of backpedal a little bit and get some of those concerns incorporated into the bill; but also the assertion that this is just a beginning, the assertion that they're going to continue in their struggle to ensure a First Nation child welfare law is put in place to take care of their particular needs and, as well, the continued struggle they're having.

I raised this issue already, but I'll raise it again because they've indicated right in their resolution to advocate for the designation of more native child welfare agencies across the province. Again, that goes to the issue of whether or not the government is prepared to put the resources necessary into making Bill 210 do what it needs to do to protect the children of Ontario and to make sure that adoptions and placements in customary care and in kinship care and all the other changes are effective and successful.

There are many other issues raised by First Nations communities. If people are interested in reviewing some of the committee transcripts from those presentations, I would certainly advise you to do so, because they had a lot to bring to the table. They had some really quite interesting and appropriate discussions around how their communities, their families and their care systems are different from ours, how the ways that they resolve issues, problems, concerns and tensions are so unique and appropriate to their own culture, and how important it is that the government acknowledge those realities in the legislation.

It's important to note that we put together a couple of dozen amendments in the process that would bring voice to or that would in some way put on the table the concerns of First Nations communities around having culturally appropriate processes built in, acknowledging that First Nations communities have a very culturally different way of dealing with child protection issues. They wanted those issues to be acknowledged in the legislation, and we attempted to do that. No, not all of our resolutions were adopted by the government and not all of our motions were approved, but some of them were, and I feel positive about that. In fact, I believe the government actually put some forward that were very similar to ours as well. I think that's extremely important, and I'm proud of that. I think we should all be proud that some of these changes were made. It's a small step to improving the relationships that government has with First Nations overall.

I have to say, though, that there were pieces that weren't approved by the government in terms of amend-

ments that we put forward. One of the biggies was the amendment around requiring the Ombudsman to have oversight of children's aid societies. I wasn't sure whether I should start that off now, considering the time, but I think I'm going to.

I put forward an amendment on having the Ombudsman have oversight of children's aid societies. People will know that the Ombudsman was, notwithstanding the minister's attempt to address the oversight issues or address the concerns that people raised—individuals came to the committee and spoke to the committee. They spoke in the public hearings about their frustration with the lack of accountability in the children's aid societies and in that system. A lot of their presentations were very powerful, and a lot of their presentations were very painful. It was disappointing that the minister didn't take hold of the opportunity to put in place a program whereby a completely separate, completely unattached, completely unbiased oversight body would be charged with the responsibility of overseeing children's aid societies and of being there for the complaints process.

I wanted to read into the record a couple of issues that were raised by the Ombudsman in a backgrounder that he put together in regard to Bill 210 specifically. It says, “The Ombudsman received 436 submissions and complaints from January 1, 2005, to February 13, 2006, regarding the need for greater oversight and accountability of children's aid societies.” The types of complaints range from concern about the care of children by the CAS to concerns about dealings with the CAS, denial of access to grandchildren, threat of removal of a child, sexual abuse by CAS staff, concerns about CAS allegations, concerns about child abuse register administration, refusal to disclose information, concerns about CAS removal of children and concerns about access and custody.

What the Ombudsman said is, “Bill 210 provides an opportunity to enhance the independent oversight of children's aid societies by extending the Ombudsman's jurisdiction to complaints about children's aid societies.

“The Ombudsman investigative process provides a credible accountability mechanism for the child protection system. Administrative conduct of children's aid societies has the potential for seriously and dramatically impacting the lives of Ontarians and it should be subject to independent investigation and systemic review of administrative practices.”

I don't think that's a lot to ask. I really don't think it's a lot to ask for the children of our province and their families, quite frankly, in the milieu of child protection, to have this independent oversight mechanism. In fact, I think anything less is doing them an injustice.

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“The cost of implementing expanded jurisdiction of the Ombudsman in this area would be minimal, given that the infrastructure and experience already exists” within the office.

“Five other provinces (Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia) have

Ombudsman oversight of child welfare issues including child protection.

"In Alberta, the Ombudsman has jurisdiction to review the conduct of government officials who administer the child protection system in that province with the exception of First Nations child protection services."

Needless to say, the background material is extensive.

People may recall that when the Ombudsman found out that this bill was coming forward—we actually called the Ombudsman's office to let them know that we couldn't see any government amendment that would address Ombudsman oversight and that the government decided to put a different accountability system in place. We let the Ombudsman know. People will perhaps be aware that, on February 14, the Ombudsman issued a press release and held a small press conference. In this press release, he said: "The Ministry of Children and Youth Services' proposed amendments to Bill 210 ... fall far short of what is needed to ensure independent, third-party, investigative oversight of children's aid societies...."

"It's a stopgap measure, which does not go far enough," said Mr. Marin. "All it does is add another layer of bureaucracy to internal processes."

Why is that? What the minister decided to do instead of simply—and it's not a difficult thing to do. In fact, the NDP actually put the amendment forward. It's not a complicated, complex amendment; it's a fairly basic amendment. It's only a couple of lines long. I have it in front of me here in our package of amendments. It says:

"16.1 Despite the definition of 'governmental organization' in section 1 of the Ombudsman Act, every society is deemed to be a governmental institution for the purposes of that act."

That's it; it's a one-liner. That would have resolved the issue of independent oversight for children's aid societies. It would have been done a lot in terms of the community input that we got in the hearings process. In fact, do you know what? Letters continue to arrive. Even within the last week, people were writing through the clerk of the committee, Anne Stokes, and it was a result of the Ombudsman coming forward. People in Ontario were saying, "We have real concerns about a lack of independent oversight of children's aid societies."

What the minister decided to do instead—and I take this from some notes that the minister kindly provided when we met with her prior to the clause-by-clause session so that she could give us the opportunity to have a heads-up about what was coming in the government changes and what were some of the reasons behind them. What she's decided to do instead is provide for a review process through a current body called the Child and Family Services Review Board. In the process previously, there had to be a director's review; there's no longer that requirement. Reviews now get done by, or complaints get processed through, this other body, the Child and Family Services Review Board. The minister indicates that the amendments would include additional requirements that "where a society or licensee makes a

decision respecting an aboriginal child, the society must provide notice of the decisions to the child's band or native community" etc. But it says, "Where there is a request made for a hearing before the Child and Family Services Review Board, the child's band or native community must first be given notice of the hearing" etc.

On the one hand, the minister is acknowledging that there's a problem with the process, acknowledging that any appeal mechanism or any oversight mechanism must build in some real language around First Nations communities—again, that's a good thing—but failing on the main grade, which is to ensure that that review process is done by the Ombudsman of Ontario, as is done in most jurisdictions across the nation. Many other provinces have this kind of oversight, so there's really no excuse not to have it.

There was some concern raised around the fact that the Child and Family Services Review Board is an organization that, at this point in time, is minimally staffed, if you want to call it that. It has an opportunity for a number of appointments; I think something like 30. There are only about 10 members on it. There's a lot of getting up to speed that needs to be done. There's the building of a bureaucracy, but guess what? It's called the Child and Family Services Review Board, so it's part of the very system we were hoping we would be able to get an independent look at. Unfortunately, the government decided not to agree with the Ombudsman's analysis and has gone ahead and put this other mechanism in place.

We were pretty disappointed, and I guess that's a light way of putting it, at the lack of acknowledgement by the government that the children and the families of Ontario are worth it. They're worth the effort, they're worth the small one-liner it would have taken to make the Ombudsman's office have oversight of the system. If you were in any of those hearings, you would have heard the real pain that some people brought to the table around their frustration and the difficulties they had in having accountability of children's aid societies.

People might recall that the coroner actually weighed in on the issue as well. One of the things the coroner was clear about was that it wasn't just a matter of having oversight or having an ability to review where there has been a death of a child. I think there was a point where members of the government were saying, "Well, the coroner agrees. The Ombudsman shouldn't have oversight over child protection," but the coroner was very specific. He said, "You will note I am making no comment about reviews of children's aid societies where a death does not occur because it is not within our mandate."

So although the coroner had something to say about having oversight where there has been a death of a child in Ontario, he was very clear to indicate that that does not let the government off the hook in terms of all the other complaints that may arise with children's aid societies where there was no death of a child. I think it's important to put that on the record, because I recall that people were waving around the coroner's comments and making

it seem as if the coroner was in agreement with the government about not needing oversight by the Ombudsman. In fact, it was a very narrow review in terms of the coroner's comments and it had only to do with the responsibility of the coroner's office, which we all know they have where there's been the death of a child in the province.

I have a number of other issues that I need to raise, and I look forward to doing so the next time this bill comes up for debate, because I've only gotten through about half of my leadoff speech.

Just to reiterate, First Nations issues and consultation around First Nations concerns was nil initially. The government made some attempts to resolve that, and I got an opportunity to read in the resolution that First Nations communities brought forward. I think it's extremely important that we continue that relationship. The government needs to do a lot more, not only in the context of child welfare but in a much broader context across the province, particularly the one that was raised by the member for Nickel Belt, which is the issue of LHINs.

The Ombudsman issue was the second thing I was able to discuss, and I think it's an important one. Next time around, hopefully I'll be able to get some concerns on the record around the government not taking into consideration problems that children have when they age out of the system, the lack of the government's preparedness to recognize extended care and maintenance for children, not only as they age but also as they go into different types of care, as well as the necessity for an independent child advocate. I'll get to those next time.

The Acting Speaker: I wish to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 37, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given yesterday on the government's electricity policy by the Minister of Energy. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter and then the minister or the minister's parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes. I'm pleased to recognize the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): Yesterday, as many will recall, I asked the Minister of Energy a very specific question on a specific project, energy-related, here in the city of Toronto: the Portlands Energy Centre project. The answer I received was simply so deficient that I felt I had no choice but to ask for further clarification and information on that question in the hope that perhaps the minister herself or the PA himself would answer that question tonight.

1800

The awarding of the Portlands contract has raised tremendous questions among people in the energy sector, people living in the city of Toronto, and those who are in the governance of the city of Toronto as well.

The question I asked yesterday was also about the approvals and whether the minister could assure us that all of the approvals necessary to ensure that this project could proceed have in fact been granted and received. There was no answer to those kinds of questions. Those issues are very, very important to the energy future of the province of Ontario, and more specifically to the energy situation in the city of Toronto.

Everybody is well aware—there is nobody out there in this House or in the general population who has not heard about the energy situation and the very, very critical situation with regard to the energy supply issue in the city of Toronto. That, we're well aware of. The minister went on to read from a letter reiterating that situation. That's not something we needed to hear. We need to know a lot about, for example, the process that was used in the awarding of this contract.

On February 4, the Ontario Ministry of Energy asked Toronto Hydro and Constellation Energy to submit a bid for a Toronto generation station. They were originally given a deadline of February 8, 2006. They were granted an extension to February 15 for that same bid. But on February 10, the Ontario energy minister, Mrs. Cansfield, announced that they had decided to move forward with Portlands Energy Centre, a partnership between Ontario Power Generation and TransCanada Pipeline. The question here is the process.

We have heard the Premier up and down in his seat a hundred times in the last couple of weeks, particularly dealing with the issues surrounding Bill 206, asking people to respect the process. Well, that is what is sorely lacking from this government: a respect for the process. There is a process here that was not carried through, was denied, and the people have a right to know whether or not the project that's being selected is in fact the best project or the most suitable project.

I do not stand here and pretend to have the ability to make a decision as to whether one project should be favoured over another, because I don't have that expertise and I don't have the information. We're not suggesting for a moment that we're trying to do that. What we're asking the minister to do is to respect that process that they initiated. In fact, they initiated the process by asking for bids for an energy power plant in the city of Toronto. They have failed to do that. There are so many inside issues that we could talk about, but we're not going to have time for that.

The crux of the problem is that there are many energy projects on the books, if you want to call it that, by this government. We have no information on almost any of them. For the most part, we have no information. There have been no public disclosures as to what kinds of guaranteed price contracts they are arriving at on any of these projects. The people of Ontario have a right to

know what kinds of deals are being made and how they are going to affect them as we roll forward. The people have a right to know: Is this government making deals with people that are going to ensure that the price of power in this province is going to escalate beyond the reach of the average homeowner and family? If they are doing these kinds of deals because they have their backs to the wall on energy, this is when you make mistakes. When you're working under too much pressure and under duress, you sometimes make mistakes, because you're not taking the time to clearly think out what your plan is. They are making mistakes in energy, and the people of the province of Ontario are going to pay for those mistakes.

The Acting Speaker: I'm pleased to recognize the member for Peterborough, who has five minutes to reply.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I certainly welcome the opportunity to address at greater length the issues raised by my colleague the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke regarding the Portlands Energy Centre and to address some of the myths around this project.

Amidst all the opposition rhetoric, the crucial issue is obscured: that as a government we must make responsible choices in order to ensure that the people and businesses of Toronto have a reliable supply of electricity. Did you know that Toronto is one of the few large cities that has no generation facilities in its downtown? Toronto is totally reliant on power that comes in from other communities, whereas a city like New York can supply as much as 75% of its own power needs. Did you know that in the 1960s, Toronto had half the population and 1,200 megawatts of supply in the downtown? Today, with twice as many people here, there is no supply.

The Independent Electricity System Operator, Toronto Hydro, Hydro One and the Ontario Power Authority have all warned that if new generation is not built soon, the city will face rolling blackouts by the year 2008. So there is common agreement that we need to build at least 500 megawatts of new supply, and have half of it running by 2008 and the remainder operational by 2010.

The issue, then, is how best to meet that need, and in our view the solution must include a combination of conservation and generation. OPA agreed that, based on the requirements, including timing, the PEC project would best meet that need. In fact, when we reviewed the letter from Constellation to Jan Carr of the OPA, entitled "Non-binding, Preliminary, Indicative Proposal," it occurred to us that it's actually an idea or a concept rather than a plan to build a multi-million-dollar generating station. The only word missing was "draft," which may have been just an oversight on their part. Moreover, the letter acknowledged the timeline/schedule risks inherent in their "Non-binding, Preliminary, Indicative Proposal."

In answer to his questions on what approvals the Portlands site has, I'd like the member to know that Portlands has the following approvals.

Approvals completed by the Ministry of the Environment:

(1) TransCanada energy and Ontario Power Generation completed the environmental screening process for the Portlands Energy Centre under Ontario regulation 116/01, which sets out the environmental assessment requirements for electricity projects.

(2) A certificate of approval for an industrial sewage works under the Ontario Water Resources Act was approved on July 4, 2005.

(3) A permit for water taking under the Ontario Water Resources Act for taking water from Lake Ontario for non-contact cooling was issued on November 28, 2005.

Regarding the cleanup of the property, a site-specific risk assessment, SSRA, was completed for this site and submitted in 2003-04. The SSRA was reviewed and a record of site condition, RSC, was acknowledged in 2004-05. The RSC is required for the city to issue building permits.

The Ontario Power Authority tells us that, over the life of the plant, expected emissions per unit generated are the lowest for the Portlands project. If we include the cost of expensive temporary generation, the environmental impact and cost difference gets much worse. In fact, according to the OPA, the fuel cost per unit of energy generated, the largest cost of a gas-fired station, is higher, and potentially much higher, for the Constellation project.

The environmental process on the Portlands project took nearly two years to complete. The Toronto Hydro project has not even started an EA process, so right from the start there are timing issues. Toronto Hydro and Constellation Energy have not explained to our satisfaction how they plan to complete the environmental process, refurbish the Hearn building and install new generation in two years. We believe that their proposal will result in the installation of 250 megawatts of temporary generation, which would cost about \$100 million and result in significantly higher emissions.

While I have the chance, I'd like to address some of the environmental additions to the Portlands project. The Portlands group will provide \$400,000 for local air quality improvements activities by community groups. This money will be paid directly to Toronto Public Health and administered by the Toronto Atmospheric Fund. PEC will work with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority to ensure that their concerns about migratory birds are addressed. The PEC will also install continuous emissions monitoring equipment and provide the medical officer of health with these data.

We believe that the Portlands Energy Centre, combined with an aggressive 300-megawatt conservation program, is the best way to provide downtown Toronto with a clean, reliable source of electricity. Having said that, that addresses the concerns of my good friend from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

The Acting Speaker: There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until later on this evening, at 6:45 p.m.

The House adjourned at 1810.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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No. 45B

N° 45B

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 28 February 2006

Mardi 28 février 2006

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 28 February 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 28 février 2006

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 36, An Act to provide for the integration of the local system for the delivery of health services, when Bill 36 is next called as a government order the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That there shall be no deferral of any vote allowed pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to 10 minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I call for debate on this motion.

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): I have some concerns that I'd like to address with respect to the LHINs bill, Bill 36, the Local Health System Integration Act, and I welcome getting some comments in before this government chokes off debate with the time allocation motion.

Some of my concerns: As we now see, there is really nothing local about the local health integration networks. We hear that a system will soon be in place to set up essentially 14 ministries of health, all staffed with very large, unaccountable bureaucracies, unelected of course, and to date there is no viable business model for us to examine.

From our side of the House, this legislation indicates a lack of planning, in particular with respect to the dynamics of rural Ontario. Communities of interest such as Norfolk county have been divided one third/two thirds, placing a number of far-flung communities within the same bureaucratic entities.

In my view, this legislation represents a threat to small local hospitals. They are lumped in with the large bureaucracies and lumped in with hospitals in major centres. The legislation suggests that our health care partners are being "bullied"—this is a word that has been bandied about for a number of months—by this Minister of

Health. The Ontario Hospital Association proposed a number of amendments; these were ignored by the minister and his appointed cronies.

This legislation represents a slap in the face to First Nations. I'm concerned about two communities within my riding, Six Nations and New Credit. I'm also concerned with legislation that was debated this afternoon, Bill 210, the Child and Family Services Act, and the impact that that legislation around children's aid services would have on native communities in my riding and whether they will continue to do business with children's aid in the future. I'm concerned about what's going on, in particular at Six Nations.

We don't see a plan. This government has given no indication that it has consulted with the federal government, in particular with respect to native concerns. I would submit that this government lacks the decency to submit this piece of legislation to full debate, deciding instead to choke off further discussion.

1850

I'd like to point out that in LHIN 4—that's the LHIN where I live—there are 12 hospitals, including our local hospitals: Norfolk General, West Haldimand in Hagersville, and Haldimand War Memorial Hospital in Dunnville. Our other local hospital is Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital, a local hospital that's not in the LHIN; it's in LHIN 2.

A number of years ago we had quite a fight in Haldimand county to keep two of our hospitals open, both War Memorial and West Haldimand. I attended the Dunnville meeting; thousands of people attended that meeting. Obviously, thousands of people could not get into the local Legion. It was the same with the Hagersville hospital. That meeting was also packed. People in Haldimand county do not want to go through that again. The concern is that with the creation of a so-called local health integration network, if you can consider a neighbourhood of 1.3 million people local, it puts the very small hospitals in with the very large institutions in the city of Hamilton and sets the stage for a potential siphoning off of resources from the smaller centres.

We did keep Dunnville Hospital open and we kept Hagersville open. I would ask this government to consider my presentation this evening essentially as a warning shot across the bow. I wish to demonstrate the resolve of the good people in Haldimand county. They do not want to see this restructuring to be used as a Liberal excuse to close their community hospitals. There is a preced-

ent: We have seen what happened with Willett Hospital, just north of Brantford, under this government's watch.

The member from Burlington pointed out in the media a sad situation with the Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital in Burlington. That's certainly a fair distance from people down in the southwest corner of Norfolk county, but it's in the same LHIN. Joseph Brant: 48 hospital beds were closed. That's 25% of all the beds in that hospital. It does raise some concern about what is in store for Norfolk General and what's in store for West Haldimand or War Memorial.

I'd like to quote the member for Burlington: "McGuinty promised transparency and openness, but has threatened hospitals not to talk about these health cuts to the media and the public." We see a trend; we see, obviously, a threat being carried through on this closure motion to terminate debate. We are being silenced with this time allocation.

I can only imagine, when I think of the large bureaucracies we heard about today, something like \$2 million being spent on expensive, brand new furniture. These people are not elected. I can only imagine how I would feel facing over 1.3 million people in an election, especially if there is the potential for mismanagement of something as important as our health care services. And 1.3 million people, that's the local LHIN. That's the neighbourhood LHIN that spans the services in my riding.

Time allocation: We're going to hear some concern about that this evening. I can only imagine what a student of political science would have to say about a motion like this to restrict debate on legislation like this. I hope he wouldn't say something like this quote: "Closure motions really are inherently bad for our parliamentary system and prevent members of all political parties—government members, opposition members, third party members—from fully participating in the debates of the day. They're designed to limit discussions."

The reason I would hope not to hear such a response or something like that in an essay from a student of political science is because he would be kicked out of school for plagiarism. These were the words used by the present finance minister, in this government, when he sat on this side of the House.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): Dwight Duncan?

Mr. Barrett: Dwight Duncan is the name. He sat on this side of the House and uttered those words, October 26, 1998. Here we are, debating a time allocation motion brought forward by this Liberal government, and one can only assume that the Minister of Finance will be voting against this time allocation motion. Of course, the minister's words would probably be taken with a very large grain of salt. I think I speak for all of us: History has shown how contemptuous this present government can be toward commitments, promises and pledges made before being elected. Obviously, it was a very creative interpretation of promises we heard during the last election.

So the real question we're debating today, what we should be debating today, asks, what is this government

afraid of? If the LHINs legislation is sound, then why would this government choke off such an opportunity to promote further discussion in this House? Wouldn't reason state that the government would seek out the opportunity to promote its legislation rather than running and hiding?

As I wrap up, as far as this government running and hiding from this debate is concerned, if they were to come down to my LHIN, LHIN 4, or LHIN 2—they could certainly hide out in LHIN 2. It stretches from Georgian Bay all the way down to Long Point on Lake Erie. That's about a six-and-a-half-hour drive; it's about 400 kilometres from top to bottom. That is a very large local neighbourhood.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I'd like to say it's a pleasure to participate in the debate tonight, Mr Speaker, but as you know and people in the gallery know and people who are at home watching know, we're here debating a time allocation motion tonight, which is essentially a motion that shuts down debate on this important bill. It shuts down debate after only two days of debate on third reading of a bill that I think many people have very significant concerns about, if the public hearings process was any indication or thermometer with respect to people's feelings.

I'm very concerned that a bill the government says will have major impacts on health services, and it certainly will by the contents of the bill, is one the government now feels it has to rush through and ram through and get done before we finish here on Thursday.

I'm going to participate in this debate by re-emphasizing and reiterating many of the concern I raised when I spoke about this bill last week on third reading, concerns that were expressed during the course of the second reading debate, concerns that we heard over and over again during the course of the public hearings. I can say that on second reading, New Democrats opposed Bill 36, and what I heard during the course of the public hearings—I attended almost every one of those hearings and every one of those presentations—just reinforced my concerns. I want to reiterate those tonight and give people some flavour of what some of the presenters who came before us had to say.

In that regard, I want to thank the presenters who came to make submissions to the committee, those who were in favour and those who were against the bill, and those who provided written submissions. I'd like to thank the folks who are in the gallery tonight for their participation here this evening.

I want to begin my remarks by saying I'm going to focus on four areas. The areas have to do, first, with the LHINs themselves, that there is nothing local about them, that they are agents of the crown and are not accountable back to the communities they are purported to serve, even though the minister would tell you otherwise. Second is the excessive power of the minister himself to order integration of health care services, which are powers we have not seen before in the province of Ontario, and that was confirmed during the course of the

public hearings. Third is the opportunities for privatization of health care services that are found in this bill, particularly section 33 of the bill, and the further opportunities for privatization of health care services, because the government refused to ensure that cutthroat bidding would not be used as the method by which the LHINs would acquire those health care services they're now going to have some responsibility for.

If I have some time, I'm going to talk about some of our amendments, but my colleague Mr. Bisson is going to speak specifically about the francophone and First Nations concerns we heard during the course of the public hearings as well.

Let me begin by talking about the LHINs. The government would have you believe that somehow these local health integration networks are going to make decisions as close to home as possible with respect to people's health care, that they're going to be responsible to do that and are going to be accountable back to the community they are purported to represent. I've got to tell you that nothing could be further from the truth, because the reality of the matter is that the LHINs are agents of the crown. They are beholden to the government in any number of ways, and their accountability is back to the government of the day, not to the community they are purported to serve.

In that respect, I want to start by reading into the record some of the areas where it is very clear the LHINs are agents of the crown. This comes from a legal analysis that was done by Sack Goldblatt Mitchell. There are a couple of legal analyses that have been done; all are very critical. This is the one I like the best, so I'm going to reference it here again this evening. The "LHINs are controlled by the government," and that is a fact. Here's where it is demonstrated in the legislation: Under sections 3 and 4, "cabinet" or the government "may create, amalgamate, dissolve or divide a LHIN."

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"(2) LHINs are governed by a board of directors appointed by cabinet and remunerated at a level determined by cabinet.... The government and not the board of directors determines who will be the chair and vice-chair of the LHIN." They serve at the pleasure of the government today. These are political appointments, not appointments from the community and certainly not elections from the community.

"(3) Even after their appointment, the board of directors of the LHINs has no independence from the government. Each member continues on the board at the 'pleasure' of cabinet and, as such, can be removed at any time without cause. Further, their reappointment is entirely dependent upon cabinet. As a result, it can be expected that the government will be able to exercise significant control over the LHINs." No doubt about that, since they appoint the LHIN board of directors. "Cabinet is also given the power to create additional LHINs or to amalgamate or dissolve existing LHINs."

"(4) 'The only members of the LHIN non-profit corporations are government-selected'—government-

appointed—"directors.... This distinguishes LHINs from other community-based non-profit organizations (including, for example, public hospitals) which are comprised of, and accountable to, a broadly based membership" in the community.

"(5) A LHIN is explicitly defined as an 'agent of the crown'" in the bill; "i.e. it acts on behalf of" and for "the government."

"(6) Each LHIN must enter into an 'accountability agreement' with the ministry that covers, among other things, its performance goals and measures and a plan for spending" that the minister provides. "If a LHIN and the ministry is unable to successfully negotiate an accountability agreement," then the minister will impose that agreement upon the LHINs.

"(7) LHINs are funded by the ministry 'on the terms and conditions that the minister considers appropriate.'

"(8) While LHINs may fund health services providers, the funding must be," and I quote again from the legislation, "in accordance with governmental requirements, including the terms of the funding that the LHIN receives from the ministry, terms of the accountability agreement by which it is bound to the ministry, and any other requirements which cabinet may prescribe." So if the government misses anything, they can pick it up in the regulation and set out some more ways that LHINs are accountable and bound to them and not to the community that they are purported to represent.

"(9) While each LHIN is to develop 'an integrated health service plan' for the locality over which it presides, this plan must be 'within the time and in the form specified by the minister' and be 'consistent with a provincial strategic plan' that is developed by the minister"—a plan that, I have to tell you, has not yet been developed by the minister. There were a number of questions raised about this during the course of the public hearings. We have no idea who's involved in the development of this provincial health plan. Nobody who came to the hearings said they were part of it. It seems that it's being done behind closed doors, yet it is the very document that is being developed behind closed doors without any public input that the individual LHINs are supposed to emulate when they develop their own local health plans.

These are the numerous ways that the LHINs are controlled by the government, that they are accountable back to the government, their masters, and that they are not at all accountable to the public they allegedly are supposed to represent. The problem, of course, is that they are agents of the crown, and as agents of the crown they also obtain some specific new, significant powers to act on behalf of the crown. I want to go through some of those powers, those new powers, that the LHINs are going to have to act as agents of the crown on behalf of the crown. They include the LHINs' control over health services providers. Here are some of the things they can do: "The bill vests LHINs, as agents of the" crown, "with an unprecedented degree of control over the structure of health services delivery in Ontario, which is in many

respects even more far-reaching and intrusive on local decision-making than was the case with the Health Services Restructuring Commission established by the previous Conservative government."

The 14 LHINs are continued by the government but are "now established under" this "statute, for the purpose of planning, funding and integrating the local health system. The term 'integrate,' as defined in act, covers a" broad range "of activities and includes coordinating services; creating partnerships with other persons or entities (whether public or private, not-for-profit or for-profit); transferring, merging or amalgamating services, operations, persons or entities; starting or ceasing to provide services; and ceasing, dissolving or winding up operations." Those are pretty significant powers that the LHINs now have.

They "are charged with the 'integration' of health services in Ontario.... [u]nder the auspices of the LHINs," this "may occur either through voluntary integration agreements among service providers ... or through compulsory integration decisions made by the LHINs. Since the LHINs are authorized to integrate health" services "by providing or changing funding ... it can be anticipated that many voluntary agreements will be facilitated" by the LHINs either promising to withhold or to give funding to obtain those voluntary integrations. That's very clear. When you have the power to fund, you have the power to force all kinds of things to happen.

"LHINs are given the power to facilitate voluntary integration agreements, and the power to veto voluntary integrations. Thus, while a health care service provider may 'integrate its services with those of another person or entity' without the involvement of its LHIN, the LHIN may order a health service provider not to proceed with an integration."

There's one more point that needs to be made in this section:

"In addition the LHINs are given the power to issue compulsory integration decisions requiring health care providers to whom it provides funding to 'provide all or part of a service or to cease to provide all or part of a service; to provide a service to a certain level, quantity or extent; to transfer all or part of a service from one location to another; to transfer all or part of a service to or to receive all or part of a service from another person or entity.' The bill also allows cabinet" to set out "regulations defining other types of integrations that may be carried out by LHINs."

So it's very clear that the LHINs have quite excessive powers. As agents of the crown, they will certainly utilize or exercise those powers on behalf of the crown to whom they are beholden, and that certainly has nothing to do with or certainly doesn't represent any form of accountability back to the community that the minister says these folks are designed to serve and service. It's very clear they are agents of the crown, and any notion that this has anything to do with "local," frankly, is just a whimsical notion at best.

Let me deal with section 28 of the bill. That talks about the integration that is permitted by the minister. Again, these are new powers that are quite excessive and that will now be exercised by the Minister of Health, who may do the following.

The minister may tell a not-for-profit or a for-profit health service provider:

"1. To cease operating, to dissolve or to wind up its operations.

"2. To amalgamate with one or more health service providers that receive funding from a local health integration network....

"3. To transfer all or substantially all of its operations to one or more persons or entities...."

We heard significant concerns from a number of groups and organizations about this particular power. Let me first quote the Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario, whom we heard from on day one, who said the following with respect to section 28 and these new powers of the minister:

"The RPNAO strongly believes that if the government wants to live up to its commitment of preserving a truly publicly funded health care system that is both transparent and accountable, section 28 should be deleted from the bill." We agree.

This comment is from a joint presentation that was done by the Canadian Mental Health Association and the Federation of Community Addiction and Mental Health Services. In the question and answer after the presentation, we learned that one of the presenters, a woman from CAMH in particular, had a previous role in the government of Ontario in developing legislation for the Ministry of Health. This is what she had to say about section 28 of the bill:

"The last parts of our brief talk about the sections that others have addressed before you about the power of the minister in section 28 to actually close organizations. We would suggest that that be deleted. That's certainly an exceptional power. As counsel in the Ministry of Health for many years, I worked on a lot of legislation. This is an exceptional power of the minister, to actually close the operation of an organization altogether. It's one thing to order programs to merge or cease operations, but to close an organization is quite exceptional," said Ms. Czukar, who made a presentation on behalf of CAMH and who used to work with the ministry and should very clearly know. She reported to the committee that this section does provide new, additional powers to the Minister of Health.

A third presentation I want to read into the record came from the Alzheimer Society of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Section 28 gives the minister powers beyond what is required and which strike at the core of our civil society. We resist strongly the provision that the minister would have jurisdiction over the entirety of an organization with which a LHIN has a funding relationship. This ... is unnecessary, unreasonable, counterproductive and, we believe, undemocratic."

They go on to give an example why: "Some of our member chapters receive only a small percentage of their overall budget from government. For example, the Alzheimer Society of Toronto receives only 8% of its \$1.3-million operating budget from government. On the other hand, the Alzheimer Society of Elgin-St. Thomas receives 50% of its \$200,000 operating budget from the province. In neither case, however, should the minister have authority to interfere with our mission-related services that are not funded by government. Section 28 gives powers to the minister to issue directives on all of the Alzheimer Society activities. These powers need to be restricted to services funded by government, as per subsections 26(2)(b) or 27(3). Our accountability for charitable dollars should remain to our donors for purpose, and to the government for tax status."

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They weren't the only group that came to express concerns about the government being able to close a portion or all of their operations even though not all of the funding for that operation actually came from the LHIN or from the Ministry of Health. That is why New Democrats urged the government to vote against section 28 in its entirety. The powers in that section are excessive and they are unreasonable. They do strike at the heart of civil society, just as the Alzheimer Society said. That's the reason we encouraged the government members to vote against it, and of course the government members did not, so these excessive powers of the minister remain in the bill.

Let me deal with section 33 next. Section 33 is a section of the bill that allows very significant opportunities for privatization of health care services, and we heard that again and again during the course of the public hearings. Section 33, as set out in the bill, does the following:

"The Lieutenant Governor in Council"—that's cabinet—"may, by regulation, order one or more persons or entities that operate a public hospital within the meaning of the Public Hospitals Act and the University of Ottawa Heart Institute ... to cease performing any prescribed non-clinical service and to integrate the service by transferring it to the prescribed person or entity on the prescribed date."

We have a couple of concerns with this section, and so did a number of presenters who came before us.

First, the power in this section allows the minister to tell a hospital and a hospital board to stop providing a particular service even if the hospital board wants to continue to provide that particular service with its own employees. But this section allows the minister to tell the hospital board to cease and desist performing that service.

Secondly, the bill talks about a "prescribed non-clinical service," and that is not defined anywhere in bill. While some people would have you believe that that only refers to maybe housekeeping or maintenance or cafeteria services, the fact is that it's not defined and was never defined during the course of the public hearings or in the

clause-by-clause. Who knows what the minister of the day would decide non-clinical services to be that he or she wants that hospital to stop operating?

The third problem is that it doesn't describe what entity that particular service has to be transferred to. There is nothing in the bill that says, for example, that anything that goes out of the hospital into the community has to go to a not-for-profit organization—no, no, no. In fact, it says "prescribed person or entity," so it leaves it wide open. The view of many who came to the hearings, and my own personal view, is that that means the government is going to order the transfer of these services to any number of for-profit organizations out in the community, like Sodexho, for example, to provide cafeteria services, or A.J. Cleaning, for example, to provide cleaning and maintenance services in the hospital.

Finally, the other concern that was raised is that it also said by a "prescribed date." There was an interesting discussion at the committee about this, because the government members tried to say during the course of the public hearings that this particular section only referred to some changes in processes that were being undertaken right now and that once those changes in processes of certain functions moving out of the hospital into the community were over, then the minister wouldn't have the power to do that any more; the power would be gone, and that would be the end of any power to force a hospital to contract out its non-clinical services. So the government brought in a regulation, which I am going to refer to in a few moments. But let me deal first with some of the concerns that were raised around this section that reinforce what I have already had to say. This from OPSEU, Local 260:

"Why does the bill target non-clinical services? Dietary and building maintenance are inherent parts of the health care system." Others "have made these services the focus of privatization and restraint, creating more hospital-borne infections and increasing the likelihood of the transmission of viruses in the health care environment."

This from SEIU, Local 1.0n:

"This provision opens the door to greater privatization of health care services. It will allow the government to cease performing any prescribed non-clinical service and to integrate the service by transferring it to the prescribed person or entity. This gives the government the right to privatize more health services, particularly the non-clinical ones. Non-clinical service transfers will be subject to the provisions of successor employer and sale-of-business provisions under the Ontario Labour Relations Act. Displaced non-clinical service workers will have no right to transfer their union contracts to the for-profit provider of non-clinical services."

This, from Linda Haslam-Stroud, who spoke at a press conference here today about Bill 36. She had this to say about section 33:

"I want to talk about section 33 of the bill, which is related to the contracting out of non-clinical services that

we believe are critical for quality patient care and for the health and safety of health care workers.

"Despite the health minister's protestations to the contrary, section 33 of the bill says the cabinet may, by regulation, order public hospitals to cease operating any non-clinical service and to integrate the service by transferring it to another person or entity. We are very concerned that non-clinical services are separately targeted and being treated differently in the bill than other health care services.

"Of particular concern is the consequence of contracting out non-clinical services, for example, housekeeping and dietary services, which are critical to patient care. Nurses know that we cannot provide quality care if we can't rely on the quality of non-clinical services. They are essential to a healthy workplace and for protecting the health and safety of employees. Housekeeping and dietary services are two such areas that have a profound impact on patient outcomes, including infection control and nutritional support.

"Contracting out these services results in workers who are disengaged and demoralized by lower wages and a lack of job security. High employee turnover rates disrupt care, as does transitory employment, where workers do not understand the values and cultures of patient care in a hospital."

Last but not least, let me read into the record some of the concerns raised by the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario with respect to section 33. They say as follows:

"We are more immediately concerned about the impact on patient safety of contracting out non-clinical services in hospitals and other residential care facilities. We have repeatedly discussed with Minister Smitherman and Premier McGuinty the negative impact of two such services: cleaning services and food delivery. Nurses, who are with patients 24 hours a day, know that outsourcing cleaning services has a negative impact on infection control and on the health and safety of patients and employees....

"To outsource housekeeping and other services with direct patient contact will be disastrous for our patients and facilities....

"Contracting out housekeeping services will result in two potential outcomes. Either nurses will be taken away from a central clinical work area to pick up the slack or patients will receive treatment in an unsanitary environment. Either choice has high costs associated with it....

"The second choice is even less palatable. It seems incredible that we should have to remind any government in Ontario about the importance of infection control in hospitals, given our experience with SARS and the more common antibiotic-resistant infections that we have experienced in recent years. A vital way to prevent infections and their spread in a hospital setting is to adhere to stringent standards which can only be met if people are trained to meet them and if workers know their workplace....

"RNAO has a clear position on outsourcing any service provider that is directly linked to patient care—including nurses, doctors, other health care professionals, unit clerks, cleaners and food services staff—must be part of the permanent staffing so they can communicate effectively and collaborate to deliver safe, quality patient care."

That's why they said that section 33 should be gone from the bill, amended, prohibited outright.

It's interesting that the only change the government made in this whole section, despite repeated concerns, was to actually put on a proscribed date with respect to the minister having the powers to order a hospital board to cease performing these particular services in the hospital. The change says now, "The Lieutenant Governor in Council shall not make a regulation under this section after April 1, 2007."

The government members tried to say, during the course of the public hearings, that after a certain time, when some of these transitional things that were happening now were done, then the power would be gone; the power to do these kinds of things would be removed. Well, you know what? We found out that after April 1, 2007, the minister doesn't have the power to order hospitals to cease and desist providing non-clinical services anymore—he loses that power. That power then gets transferred to the LHINs. After April 1, 2007, it's the LHIN boards that are going to have responsibility for ordering a hospital board to cease providing non-clinical services.

Frankly, what some of the presenters were told at the public hearings wasn't altogether correct, as we found out during the clause-by-clause. This power does not disappear after some alleged processes, which are apparently occurring right now, end. They were never named, and who knows if that was true. What is clear is that after April 1, the power that the minister has to order a hospital to cease and desist providing a service then gets transferred to the LHINs. Those opportunities for privatization just keep right on going, with all of the negative consequences that are associated with that.

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Let me deal with the whole notion of cutthroat bidding, and cutthroat bidding that allows for increased privatization of health care services as well. On the first day of the public hearings, the minister came to the committee to make a presentation and made it very clear to the committee members that—well, let me just quote what he had to say: "But that does not excuse what we have seen in the two months since our government introduced Bill 36, which is an organized campaign of attacks that are often baseless, poorly researched and appear to be driven simply by the desire to provoke fear."

Then the minister went on to outline some of what he called essentially the myths that were being spread about the bill. Here's the one I want to focus on: "Local health integration networks are going to extend the competitive bidding model to the entire public health ... system. Well, I don't want to seem repetitive, but I'm holding the bill

right here ... and, as I've said, I have read it many times. Folks, it doesn't say that anywhere.... Local health integration networks are designed to better manage and coordinate health care services in order to ensure better access to those services. That does not mean competitive bidding...." That's what the minister had to say at the start of the hearings.

Any number of presenters came before the hearings and made it very clear that the bill doesn't say that the LHINs are going to use cutthroat bidding, but the bill also doesn't prohibit the LHINs from using cutthroat bidding. Any number of presenters made that clear. Let me just reference some for you in terms of the concerns they had about cutthroat bidding already in home care.

"Ontario's experiment with competitive bidding in home care has been a disaster for seniors. Many have seen unnecessary changes in their caregivers. We are extremely concerned that Bill 36 may give way to an expansion of competitive bidding, leading to an inefficient and chaotic system. Health care restructuring has a direct impact on equity of service, continuity of care and quality of service. Amend Bill 36 to prohibit expanding the use of competitive bidding as a method for allocating funding to health service providers." This from the Elder Health Elder Care Coalition.

Secondly, from the Ontario Coalition of Senior Citizens Organizations: "Many of our members are wondering if the whole LHIN project is a backdoor way to bring in two-tier medicine. We trust this is not the government's intention, but there is not much in the legislation to reassure them. Is the purchaser-provider split really a more palatable word for managed competition? We have not forgotten how the public-private partnerships were given the more palatable name of 'alternative financing initiatives.' What is missing is a clear prohibition against allowing shareholding companies to invest in any sector of the health care system. The experience in various parts of the world has made it abundantly clear that when the profit motive drives decision-making in a public program, the cost goes higher and the service to the public goes lower in both quantity and quality."

Here's what the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario had to say in their submission about cutthroat bidding:

"Ontario's experiment with competitive bidding in home care has been a failure. It has resulted in: a shift to for-profit providers (the share of the total volume of nursing services awarded to for-profit providers increased from 18% in 1995 to an estimated 46% in 2001); a loss of the social infrastructure associated with not-for-profit providers; critical shortages of community nursing staff that are directly linked to system instability and worsened working conditions in this sector compared to others; grave concerns about the quality of care; a misallocation of resources resulting from the high transaction costs associated with the process; and tensions between direct providers and community care access centres.

"Expansion of competitive bidding as a method of allocating funding to health service providers in Ontario

would be expensive, inefficient, and lead to deteriorating health outcomes. Government officials have stated that there is no intention to extend competitive bidding beyond the home care sector. However, any legislation passed will continue beyond the current government and minister. As a result, that intention must be enshrined in the proposed legislation.

"Recommendation 3:

"Amend Bill 36 to prohibit LHINs from using competitive bidding as a method of allocating funding to health service providers."

During the course of the clause-by-clause, I moved a motion with respect to cutthroat bidding. I moved a very specific motion, because I got tired of hearing the minister in his remarks saying that nothing in the bill said that the LHINs were going to use competitive, cutthroat bidding, and I got tired of some of the Liberal members telling presenters that they were wrong and no, there was nothing in the bill that would say that LHINs have to use cutthroat bidding. So I moved a very specific amendment which reads as follows:

"No competitive bidding

"(5.1) A local health integration network shall not use competitive bidding, a managed competition or any other similar process for any purpose under this act."

I put that motion on the table to challenge the Liberal members, and guess what? All but one of the Liberal members voted down that amendment to prohibit competitive bidding being used by the LHINs. That says volumes about what's really going to happen with respect to this legislation. It says volumes about this government's lack of commitment to shut down cutthroat bidding in those sectors of health care that the LHINs are going to be responsible for.

One only has to look at the track record with respect to health care cuts and health care privatization to say it's no wonder that the Liberal members didn't support this particular amendment that I moved. Don't-forget, this is a government that, after being elected, one of the first things they did was to bring in a new health tax, after promising there would be no new taxes. After Dalton McGuinty said there certainly would be no health care premium or health care tax, the single biggest tax increase in the province of Ontario came to the public of Ontario courtesy of this government in the first budget, and of course this is a very regressive tax that hits at modest- and low-income families very specifically.

This is a government that said there would be no cuts to health care, and in that very same first budget delisted chiropractic services, eye examinations for people between 20 and 64 and any number of physiotherapy services. This is a government where the leader, Mr. McGuinty, said before and during the election, "We will not have private financing of hospitals." He made that very clear both before and during the election campaign, and then, after they were elected, we now have any number of projects—probably 28 of them—that are going to be privately financed, which is going to cost the taxpayers of this province oh so much more money.

We have a government that took the Conservative's regressive, competitive, cutthroat bidding process in home care and continues that very destructive, chaotic process in home care today.

That is the government's track record with respect to privatization of health care services and health service cuts, and no one should have been surprised that the Liberals, despite what they said to presenters during the course of the public hearings, turned around and voted against my amendment to prohibit cutthroat bidding to be used by the LHINs. Nobody should be surprised, because you only have to look at the track record to know that that's exactly what they were going to do with respect to this issue.

I want to leave some time for my colleague Mr. Bisson, but let me just say a couple of more things. I want to point out some of the other amendments we moved that the government voted down. We voted to recognize the role of Franco-Ontarians in planning and delivery of health services in their communities in the preamble, and the government voted that down. We moved that the preamble be amended to respect health care professionals, confirm that they are fundamental to the delivery of health care, recognize a shortage of health care professionals, confirm that regional disparities in the availability of health care need to be addressed, and recognize that patients who are required to travel as a result of integration should be reimbursed. The government voted that down.

We moved a definition of "public interest" in the bill that related directly to the public interest provisions in the government's Bill 8, because there is no definition of public interest in the bill. The government members voted that down.

We voted to have elections of LHIN board members. If they're truly accountable to the community, they should be elected by the community, just like MPs, MPPs, school board trustees and municipal councillors, and of course the government voted that down as well.

We moved a motion that would have made it very clear that any savings achieved by LHIN boards would be savings that would be added to the global budget that they were going to receive in the next fiscal year, not subtracted from or reduced from that global budget. Guess what? The government members voted that down too.

We also moved an amendment that would have made it clear that any of those workers affected by privatization under section 33 of the bill, where the minister can order some of these non-clinical services to cease and desist being provided—that anybody who got transferred to a for-profit agency that wasn't primarily a health service provider would still have protections with respect to their union, their contracts, their pension, their benefits. The government voted that down as well.

Let me conclude, because my colleague Mr. Bisson is going to talk specifically to francophone and First Nations concerns. I was opposed to this bill on second reading, and I heard so much more about the concerns of people

during the course of the public hearings. This bill is horribly flawed. The very legitimate concerns that were raised about privatization have not been addressed. The legitimate concerns about the excessive powers of the minister have not been addressed. This is a bill that is not worth supporting.

Applause.

The Acting Speaker: I have to address the people who are in the public galleries right now. I would ask you to listen to me for a moment. As the Acting Speaker of the Ontario Legislature, it's my role and responsibility to maintain decorum in this place. We cannot permit outbursts from the gallery. This is what I have to tell you at this time, and I would ask you to refrain from any outbursts whatsoever, including clapping.

Further debate?

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Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I want to talk for a minute about our record of consultation on this legislation, but I have to say that I've listened to the member for Nickel Belt for weeks now, it seems. We travelled together with this bill and I've heard much of what she had to say many times. But I was really surprised to hear her talking about the need to take the money out of health care system, because if that \$2.4 billion that we raised to put into the health care system were to be removed, I'm just wondering what the member for Nickel Belt would cut from the system. So I was very surprised to hear her say that that wasn't a good idea.

We're talking about the consultation on this legislation tonight, and the member for the opposition party earlier talked about us running and hiding and not being interested in continuing debate and shutting down debate on this legislation. We introduced the idea of LHINs in October 2004. We've had town hall meetings and 4,000 people have come and talked to us about LHINs. The minister has spoken to countless stakeholders on this legislation. We've had nine hours of debate and we are moving forward on this legislation because we need to get this framework of planning into place in this province.

It's notable that in the session under Mr. Eves between—

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): There we go: Tory-bashing.

Ms. Wynne: Well, you know that in the session under Mr. Eves, not one bill was debated at third reading—not one bill. Of the 67 of 110 government bills that received royal assent, 61% were time-allocated. We've consulted on this bill and, unlike the social contract, which got zero minutes of hearings, we've had hearings on this bill. We are moving forward in a responsible way.

I want to talk a little bit about what's actually in the legislation, because that will demonstrate why it's so important for us to get this legislation through. The member for Nickel Belt talked about "local" being a whimsical notion. In fact, what we've got now in Ontario is one integration network. We've got the Ministry of Health

here in Toronto that has responsibility for the whole province. What we're trying to do is take people from local communities and allow them to have input into the plan for how health care should be delivered.

I want to read from "Objects" of the LHINs, section 5 in the bill. The reason to have local health integration networks is "to identify and plan for the health service needs of the local health system in accordance with provincial plans and priorities," "to engage the community of persons and entities involved with the local health system in planning and setting priorities for that system, including establishing formal channels for community input and consultation" and "to ensure that there are appropriate processes within the local health system to respond to concerns that people raise about the services that they receive." That's the reason we're putting local health integration networks in place: so that we can have that local input.

Right now, if I have concern about the education system, I can go to a school or a school board and I can voice my concern. If I have concerns about even a community agency that's funded by the government, I can go to the board of directors of that community agency. If I have a concern about a municipal service, I can go to the city council. If I have a concern about the health system, if I have a concern about the planning and the way the system is working in my community, I can come to Toronto. If you live in New Liskeard or Niagara, you can come to Toronto and talk to the people in the ministry, but that is not going to give you a very good sense of how the local decisions are being made. So what we're doing is putting in place boards that will have input from the community.

Part of what the local health integration network boards are mandated to do in section 16 of this legislation is to engage the community. To the comment of the member for Nickel Belt about engaging the francophone community, amendments were put in place that would require the LHIN to deal with, talk to and engage both the francophone community and the First Nations communities, to have bodies in place that they would be required to speak to in the planning that they do. I think the idea that there is no local component this legislation is completely misleading, because the whole reason for these networks to be put in place is so that the decision-making can go down to the local level.

I was talking to a constituent today, actually, who is a technician in the health care system in Toronto, and she was concerned about some of the things that she was being told by her union. For example, she was surprised when I told her that there was nothing in this legislation that explicitly expands the privatization of health care, nothing that expands the competitive bidding process. She was surprised that this legislation does provide for planning. She didn't know that that's what this piece of legislation was being put in place to do. She has been listening to a concerted campaign to talk about things that are beside the point in terms of this legislation.

Our record on privatization is that we have brought MRIs back into the public system. We have said to the Copeman clinic, "No, you're not going to be able to deliver your service in that way in Ontario." We've turned privatization back at the border. We are not interested in further privatizing the system, and the commitment to medicare act, Bill 8, is our written commitment to that. What this legislation does is build on that commitment and says that in order to sustain the publicly funded system in this province, we have to do our planning and we have to have local decision-making.

We used to have district health councils. Those district health councils are being replaced. The district health councils had no capacity to implement their plans. They had the planning function, but they had no teeth, as one of the people who came to speak to us said. They were toothless bodies that could not implement a plan, and we're giving the local health integration networks the ability to do that.

I think that far from shutting down debate on this issue, what we've done is engaged in debate with people in this province. We've made it clear what it is we're trying to do and we continue to have mechanisms in place. This legislation puts the mechanisms in place that will allow us to continue having that conversation.

I'm absolutely not surprised that the members of the official opposition do not have a clue what it means to engage the public. I was a citizen in the gallery watching the previous government as it brought bill after bill and did not allow debate on those bills and did not have committee hearings on most of its legislation, so it's not surprising to me that they are not interested in the mechanisms in this legislation that would engage people over time. It's all very well to have committee hearings, which we've done, but what we need in this province are mechanisms to continue the conversation about our health care system.

I think I've made the point here before that in order for this health care system to be sustainable, we have to look at future needs, and as the baby boom ages, we're going to need very good planning. I'm looking at you, Mr. Yakabuski. We're going to need very good planning in order to deal with the knees, the hips, the eyes and the deteriorating physiques of all of the people who are aging in this province. The reality is that if we don't get it right, then we're going to lose the system. We have to make it sustainable. We have to find a way to put those local processes in place.

Not every community is going to have the same solutions. That's why we need the local board, because what's necessary in one part of the province is not going to necessarily be the way to go ahead in another part of the province. Geography in Ontario is a huge driver in terms of how we plan for all of our services: education, health care, you name it. We have to take our geography into account. That's why to continue to make all those decisions in Toronto makes no sense. So \$21 billion of a \$33-billion budget being taken from the centre, from the Ministry of Health, and being put in the hands of local

health integration networks—those boards, those people who have the expertise and the knowledge of the region—is the way we're going to make the system sustainable. We're the last province in Canada to deal with health care on a regional basis. We have to do this in order to make the system move forward in a way that's rationale.

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I'm very happy to support this legislation. I'm very happy that within this legislation are mechanisms that will allow us to keep engaging citizens in the province on the issues that confront them locally. I'm very happy that, once the LHINs are up and running, when people in this province have a concern about issues in their community, they'll have somewhere to go. The meetings of the LHINs are open to the public. They'll have opportunities to bring their concerns to the people who are making these decisions, unlike now, where they don't have a door to open to have that conversation. There's no one locally who can talk to them about the systemic delivery of health care. That's what we're talking about.

I'll just close, but the issue of SARS was raised by the member for Nickel Belt, and the concern about that kind of systemic issue. It seems me that dealing with those kinds of concerns, those kinds of systemic problems, is exactly why we need to have better coordination of services. Without the coordination of services, we are vulnerable as a province to that kind of epidemic, that kind of lack of communication among the different arms of the health care system. We need those local planning bodies in place so that if there's a crisis, if there's a need for the system to rise and deal with a crisis like that, the system is in place and everybody knows where the services are and how to deal with each other on an ongoing basis.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly look forward to getting this legislation through.

Mr. O'Toole: Tonight, for those viewing—and I appreciate the people who are staying here, because I know this affects your lives and the work you do. I want to say publicly that I respect the work you do in our hospitals. Lakeridge Health is in my riding of Durham. I see people here tonight representing that.

This government notice of motion number 75 is anti-democratic. It's shutting down the debate, limiting the debate. This is the last week that the House is in session. When they're in session like this—actually, they want this gone. You have to ask yourself, what's their motive?

Ms. Martel is quite an expert. I have a lot of respect for the work she has done as health critic. I would just say that she raised many similar questions to those the opposition is raising here. So don't take it necessarily from me. I listened to her speech with some compassion.

What's really happening here, quite honestly, is that you wonder what the rush is. What's the secret? Why wouldn't they just continue to try to reach consensus? That is the most suspicious and enlightening part of the debate being time-allocated. I put you on alert that that's why we're quite animated here tonight.

I have participated in this. I was fortunate to be the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health for a couple of years and know how difficult and complex it is. It does take a lot of money. But most of that money is spent for front-line services for people, and people who are at risk or vulnerable. They need your services. It's difficult.

Here's what is happening. When I look at a local health integrated network, this is anything but local. There are 14 of these community-based things, and there are about 13 million people, about a million people per LHIN. That's bigger than most provinces.

The Acting Speaker: I would just ask the member for Durham to address his remarks through the Chair.

Mr. O'Toole: I am intrigued by the people who are here. This probably affects their lives and their livelihoods, so out of respect for their attendance, I am trying to make it relevant to them.

The LHINs are quite large. They're anything but local. The best way for me to visualize it for my constituents—the assistant minister of health, the minister of wellness, Mr. Watson, is here tonight. He should know that Central East is from Queen's Park to Algonquin Park. It's a large area and a very diverse population to service.

Local health networks are replacing the current seven Ministry of Health offices that are around to act as regional resource offices for the hospitals, long-term-care and other facilities. On top of that, the 16 district health councils are being disbanded. Those 16 district health councils—I'm going to read the notes that were given to me by the researcher. These aren't political notes. They're prepared by Carrie Hull, research officer, Research and Information Services. Here's what she says:

"Local health integration networks are 14 community-based organizations with a tentative"—these are her words—"mandate to plan, coordinate, integrate, manage and fund health care at the local level within a defined regional area. The LHINs replace and expand upon the functions of the district health councils, often referred to as DHCs, the former province-wide network of 16 advisory health planning boards. It is proposed that they will operate under the terms Bill 36, the local health integration system."

We all appreciate the fact that there needs to be improved coordination, especially on the technology side: integrating patient records, digital imaging, all those kinds of things. But for the most part, the communities own most of these hospitals. In my area, for instance, the community just loves the hospital in Port Perry, and the foundation—they're all volunteers, quite ordinary people for the most part, who give of their time and their lives to make sure the resources are there to provide the services that are required.

Now, I'm going to describe for you, from the research paper I have: The Central East LHIN is headquartered in Ajax, and it serves an area from Scarborough all the way to Algonquin Park—a huge area. According to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's website, the Central East LHIN will have jurisdiction over approximately 16

existing hospitals, 70 long-term-care facilities, four community care access centres, three community health centres, two children's treatment centres, 25 mental health agencies, 50 community support service agencies and five addiction centres. A map of Central East is enclosed, and I could share that with anyone. It's quite frightening. The map is here.

Interjection.

Mr. O'Toole: The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke wants to have a look at the map. There are some good notes that you'll be able to use.

The suspicion we have is, what's the rush? This is such a fundamental change structurally. What's the secret here? What have you got to hide?

When I read the bill—and I have. I have read every section of the bill, in fact, and I'm quite familiar with it. I sat in on the bill. I put on the record tonight that there are four sections that I have serious troubles with, and I'm going to go over them just briefly in the very few minutes I have.

Section 18 is a section that has not been mentioned by many speakers. I'm just looking at it: "The minister may set the terms of the agreement which shall include the matters set out in" the following clauses. They basically report to the minister. If you read section 18—it's in part IV—you will find in that section that "The minister and each local health integration network shall enter into an accountability agreement in respect of the local health system." It makes it very clear from the beginning and including the preamble that Minister Smitherman is in charge, period. If you doubt that, look at the terms of reference for the minister's authority in section 36.

I'm going to read section 36 for you. It's very important. This is the powers section. If anybody wants to look it up on the website, I'll send you copies of these sections. "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations." All of these appointments are by order in council as well, which are—I hate to say it, but we did it when we were there, and the NDP did it. They're political appointments. They're probably good people. I'm not discrediting them, by the way. I wouldn't want that on the record. I've sat in on some of the agency appointments, as has Mr. Tascona. For the most part, they're well-intended citizens, and forget the politics.

But section 36 is important to read. There are about 11 clauses in that section, but I'm going to read one just to illustrate how much power the minister actually has. It says in clause (f) that the minister "may make regulations ... respecting community engagement under section 16, including how and with whom a local health integration network or a health service provider shall engage the community, the matters about which a local health integration network or a health service provider shall engage the community and the frequency" of those communications. All of them will go back to the minister. They just have a rubber stamp—"No," "No," "No." That's what they're doing.

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They're going to say, "We gave the LHIN the money, and now you have to change all these birthing centres to one hospital, because there's not enough volume to have every hospital giving mothers and children the opportunity to have a baby in their own community." Then they'll move the incubators and all the stuff that the foundation and the community donated in a fundraiser to some other hospital 80 kilometres away. They'll say, "What happened to our children's centre here in the hospital?" that the auxiliaries and those other people worked for and gave of their time and their life and their commitment to build their community. It's sad and tragic. When I look at Bowmanville or Port Perry or Uxbridge, it's—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): What happened?

Mr. O'Toole: Mr. Rinaldi knows Northumberland. He knows himself the anguish between Port Hope and Cobourg. He knows, and he did nothing, and now he's blaming—they're going further; it's going further. It's scary, actually.

I just want to make sure that's on the record. Section 36 is worth a read. It's where the real power is.

But there are two other sections that are absolutely critical to a full understanding of how the centralization and dismantling occurs. Section 33 is a rather obsequious little section. You'll want to have a look at this one here. This is so scary that it needs to be put on the record. Section 33 is integration by regulation.

"The Lieutenant Governor in Council may, by regulation, order one or more persons or entities that operate a public hospital within the meaning of the Public Hospitals Act and the University of Ottawa Heart Institute ... to cease performing any prescribed non-clinical service and to integrate the service by transferring it to the prescribed person or entity" described by the minister.

If you look at all the legal eagle stuff here:

"Compliance

"(2) The persons and entities mentioned in a regulation made under subsection (1) shall comply with the regulation and subsections ... apply with respect to the persons and entities...." They shall cease performing a prescribed service delivery as prescribed by the minister. It's right in here.

I'm afraid. I have to stop because I get so—health care is the number one issue for each one of us in our ridings. It troubles me so much. This is dismantling what has worked, with imperfections, of course. It's troubling that most of the—

Interjections.

Mr. O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, there's some barracking occurring on the other side. Most of the members of the government have all drank the Kool-Aid. They haven't read the bill; they've haven't got the foggiest. I listened to some of their remarks. It's clear that they have had the briefing from the ministry. I'm not disparaging; I'm just saying that they've believed it all. They said they wouldn't raise taxes, and they did. You can hardly

believe a thing they say. That's the discouraging part of my debate.

But sections 18, 28, 33 and 36—those sections alone put all the power in Mr. Smitherman's hand. When you can't get your grandmother changed from a long-term-care facility, George will say, "Well, we've made it better."

Thanks, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to bring some light to an issue that's going to have serious repercussions for the delivery of health care, not just in my riding of Durham but in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): I'm surprised that the Liberal Party, the governing party, has not chosen to participate further in the debate and defend their actions with respect to this time allocation motion and closing off debate on Bill 36, the local health integration networks legislation.

For those who are tuning in on the legislative channel this evening and wondering about what is occurring here, in effect the McGuinty government has chosen to limit debate, limit time to discuss what is perhaps the most significant change in terms of the health care system in the province of Ontario in a generation, if not more than that. It's regrettable that they're not participating.

The current House leader for the government, Mr. Bradley—I could go through a range of quotes from the past with respect to time allocation, but I felt that I'd just pull one out of his long history of quotes while he was sitting on the opposition benches.

The one quote I'm going to use is that time allocation is "putting the boot to the opposition." The government of the day, the Liberal Party under Dalton McGuinty, is not only putting the boot to the opposition in terms of our opportunities to discuss the legislation and the implications of the legislation, but a great many Ontarians—we have some of them in the galleries here this evening who are extremely concerned about the implications for the health care system, and for their opportunities for employment within the health care system in Ontario as well. The government, again, is shutting off the debate, closing the debate, forcing us to vote on this legislation, and with a majority government, we know what the result will be at the end of the day: This legislation is indeed going to be shoved through.

It's unfortunate—I mentioned this earlier as being a very, very significant piece of legislation, but it has pretty much flown under the radar. Most Ontarians—and I'm gauging this from what I hear from my colleagues and what reaction I'm getting in my own constituency office—the public really have very little, if any, understanding of what's transpiring here, what the implications might be for their communities, for their hospitals. There's very little understanding, very little comprehension, very little awareness. There have been some efforts in the last little while by some organizations to try and draw attention, but perhaps it's been too little, too late, given the government's reaction here: that they're simply moving ahead with it regardless. One of the dis-

appointments for me personally is the Ontario Hospital Association's silence with respect to this issue.

I represent a number of smaller communities with smaller hospitals, and two outstanding health care facilities, in Brockville and Kemptville. One of the implications, one of the serious implications in this legislation, as referenced by my colleague from Durham, is the possibility—and I think this is not just a possibility, it's a reality—that we're going to see the moving of services currently provided, especially in some of these smaller facilities, whether it's hip surgeries or obstetrics, as my friend referenced, cataract surgeries, a whole range of specific services that are currently available in the smaller institutions, that from a centralized perspective—and this is really what this is, centralized by the decision-makers in Belleville, who will be watched very closely by the folks here in their ivory towers in Queen's Park. Even though the minister denies it, if you look at the legislation, this really is a centralization of power in the minister's office. As has been pointed out, we have people at the LHIN level who are political appointments. They are there at the wish, if you will, of the Minister of Health and the government of the day. So to suggest that there's going to be any significant degree of independence is really trying to pull the wool over the eyes of the public of the province of Ontario. It just isn't going to happen.

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When I look at my own riding, as such—the primary consideration when you're elected is to represent the best interests of your riding—I'm very concerned about what's going to happen with respect to some of the services that are available in Brockville. Obstetrics is an example where we have had some significant decline in the number of obstetrical—what's the correct word I'm looking for?—the number of births in that unit. I can see it as being in jeopardy, and some of the others that, to the number crunchers, perhaps don't make financial sense, but in terms of the availability of service at the local level, they make a great deal of sense.

When they talk about number crunching and savings and efficiencies, what they're looking at, I guess, is the system, not the individual. Certainly those cost savings may be achieved by the government and the Ministry of Health; it's the individual who has to pick up the additional cost. To go for a minor surgery that will no longer be available in Brockville, you will have to go to Belleville, for example—that service may be provided in Belleville—which is going to require travel and may well include an overnight stay or more than one overnight stay. It may require a family overnight stay as well because of the concern about the family member. Those are costs that will be assumed by the individual, the families, not by the province. Perhaps that is some justification to the number crunchers in Queen's Park, but I don't think it makes much sense if you get down to the grassroots level and start talking to people who care about accessibility to health care services in their own communities.

I mentioned the Ontario Hospital Association. I don't know what's going on there. Some sort of a backroom deal has been arrived at with respect to the lack of even constructive criticism coming forward, the lack of concern about what might happen to some of these facilities and some of the services that are currently provided. Nothing; total silence from that sector. We've talked about the minister being a bully in the past, and perhaps those intimidation tactics have paved the way for what we're seeing in terms of the lack of involvement by the Ontario Hospital Association with respect to these critical, critical changes in the health care sector and the impacts they could have on hospitals and local communities.

Another area that is perplexing to me is the community care access centres. Again, there's another group that have been mysteriously silent. You know, perhaps I shouldn't speculate, but of course we're hearing views that they're not being public with respect to concerns because they've all been assured by the ministry and the ministry officials, perhaps the minister himself: "No one is going to lose their job. In fact, we may just change the sign on your desk from CCAC to LHIN, and you will be getting a very significant severance payment as a result of the sign change on your desk." I hope that's not the case. I hope that's not really what's happening out there, but it's certainly what we're hearing in terms of the silence in that sector as well.

These are all very significant concerns, very significant issues that, for whatever reasons, are not being engaged in by some very important players in the health care sector of this province. It should be troubling, it should be troubling to average citizens, but, of course, as I said, there hasn't been enough noise out there. There hasn't been enough racket, enough public understanding or awareness of just what the implications are. I know that we, as individuals, have certainly all tried, through press releases, through what we can do in our own communities. But we have to get more people engaged in this.

We're not going to see a lot of the implications flow from this until we get past the next provincial election. This has been designed so that the negative fallout from this will not start to appear until shortly after the next provincial election. This is the cynicism of the current government. We saw it with their flip-flop on taxes, when they promised—Mr. McGuinty was on television saying, "I will not increase your taxes." A few months into government and they bring in the largest tax increase in the history of the province.

The cynicism about that is, "We've got three and a half years." It's a cynicism about the electorate. They believe that this will all be forgotten, that it will be long gone from the memory of voters in the province of Ontario by the time they go to the polls in 2007. I hope they're not correct. That's the same sort of approach they're taking with this legislation: "We're going to do this in a way that the implications will not become apparent to the public until perhaps 2008, and then that dumb,

unwashed public out there will forget it by the time the next provincial election rolls around."

That's the cynical attitude of the Liberal Party of Ontario, clearly reflected in so many initiatives they undertook in their first six to eight months in office, and again being clearly indicated in the way they're approaching this legislation, the way they've planned this legislation, the way they've planned the implications not to flow until after the next provincial election.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I've got about 16 minutes left in our time here for the NDP caucus—

Interjections.

Mr. Bisson: There's the government: "Whoopee, debate has ended." Wow. Are you guys ever smart and big. Give me a break. We're in a time allocation motion because you guys don't want to have a debate on this, and you're celebrating because a member of a caucus has 16 minutes left. I think that tells us where you guys are at.

Anyway, there are three or four points that I want to make in this debate with regard to the legislation, and I wanted to speak briefly on the time allocation. I want to put some stuff on the record because, as Mr. Runciman and my colleague Shelley Martel said, we're here to represent our core constituents, both the people we represent in our ridings but also within the constituency of our critic portfolios.

I'm the representative for Timmins-James Bay, as everybody here knows. But for people out there, that's up in northeastern Ontario: a large population of francophones, large population of First Nations and everybody else. We're a very large geographical area. This legislation is going to impact very directly on the people I represent in this province.

I want to start, in no particular order, by talking a little bit about what this means to First Nations. First of all, I think all of us agree—certainly people here watching and people back home—that First Nations have been dealt a fairly bad hand when it comes to the level of service they get in health services in their communities. You just need to travel to communities across Ontario, any First Nations community, to look directly at what services they have in their communities.

We complain when we can't get Meals on Wheels to deliver a meal on time when it comes to care within the community. They'd be happy if they had somewhere to go if they got sick, because many of them don't have hospitals. Many of them don't have first aid stations. Pretty well none of them has long-term-care facilities; very few do. There is hardly any community care. If there's any community care, it's dispensed through the community health centres. There is really no integrated system of health care in those communities, I think primarily because the federal government has done a bad job, and also the government of Ontario over the years has been disinterested.

The First Nations look at this legislation and say, "We'd like to be part of the health care system, but

you're going to lump us into a system that doesn't recognize our unique position within society. Treaties were signed between the federal and provincial governments that say what the responsibilities are insofar as what they expect from First Nations and what we expect from them."

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They came before this committee and they were very, very clear. Chief Stan Louttit I know I talked to directly from Mushkegowuk tribal council, and the people from Nishnawbi Aski, John Beaucage from his particular treaty council, Angus Toulouse from the Chiefs of Ontario and others—they were unanimous. They came and they said, "Listen, we want a number of things. We have three specific things that we want the Liberal government to address." They were very clear. They said to the Liberals, to the Conservatives and to the New Democrats, "We need a number of things." The first thing they said was, "We need a non-derogation clause. To explain what that means, in no way, shape or form will this legislation infringe on our inherent right to self-government and the rights we have by virtue of the treaties we've signed."

You would think, Ontario being a signatory to that treaty—Treaty 9, where I come from, was 100 years ago this year—would say, "That's not a problem. That's a no-brainer. We're going to give you a non-derogation clause." But when the motion was brought forward by my colleague Shelley Martel—I will not read into the record the entire motion because I haven't got time—that Ontario recognizes that the First Nations are a nation unto themselves in regards to how they govern themselves and that we will not in any way infringe upon their rights as a people, basically a non-derogation clause, the government voted against it. The First Nations are quite upset over that because they say, "A repetition of the past. We've got a bad deal for the past 100 years in this treaty, and it continues." So much for this new relationship that the government touts as being the relationship they want to establish with First Nations. I'll get into that a little bit later with regard to some of the comments we got from Chief Toulouse and Chief Beaucage and others.

Another amendment that I want to read: "First Nations programs and services" mean all existing and future health-related programs and services directed primarily at First Nations communities and citizens, including, without limitation, those programs and services funded in whole or in part under the 1965 welfare agreement, those programs and services funded in whole or in part by the federal government of Canada," won't be affected. Again, the government voted against the motion. They're saying there are responsibilities on the part of the federal government, but when it comes to health care, they want to make sure that this legislation in no way gets the federal government or the province off the hook when it comes to providing those services. Again, the government didn't accept that motion as put forward by Shelley Martel, my colleague who is our health critic in the New Democratic Party of Ontario.

The other one was the whole issue of the delivery of aboriginal health services. They're basically getting at that "Nothing contained in this act"—and what they wanted is—"no action taken under this act shall be interpreted to have the effect of removing responsibility for the delivery of health services and programs that are directed primarily to First Nations people from the ministry and transferring it to another person or entity."

They didn't want to get caught up in any kind of a transfer, privatization, shifting of responsibilities. They're saying, "Listen. We made a deal with the crown. We didn't make it with Mattel toys, we didn't make it with Sodexo, we didn't make it with anybody else but the crown. And we want to have in the legislation a guarantee that you're not going to in any way, shape or form by the creation of LHINs do away with that."

Again, the motion, as brought forward by my colleague Shelley Martel, was voted down by the government. I say to the government: Shame on you. You're the guys who said, "We're prepared to have a new relationship with First Nations. We will treat you differently. 'Come,' say the Liberals. 'We love you. We'll hug you.'" And they find out that basically the hug doesn't mean anything. It's like going out on a date and not being very satisfied at the end of the evening with the one you've been with.

Interjections.

Mr. Bisson: I'm just saying that that's what these guys are like.

I want to read a letter dated February 9 from Bob Goulais, executive assistant to Grand Council Chief Beaucage. He writes the following, and this is important. Members need to understand this. He says—and here's the rationale: "The Union of Ontario Indians are concerned that the province of Ontario has failed to properly consult with the First Nations of Ontario on this sweeping legislation that has a genuine possibility of impacting negatively on the aboriginal inherent and treaty rights in health of every First Nation member in the province of Ontario."

They're saying to you very clearly, "Listen. Whoa. Put the brakes on. We need to be talked to. We need to be consulted. We have to work with you. We need to do the health planning ourselves with you so that it basically is in keeping with our traditions and the geography and the people we represent."

He goes on to say—this is after the government introduced all their amendments and didn't respond to any of their concerns. He says, "In conclusion, in Regional Chief Angus Toulouse's response to Minister Smitherman of February 9, 2006, he echoed the sentiments of the First Nations Task Force that the development of the LHINs is not in keeping with the National Health Blueprint and that the present amendments as received by members of the task force" put forward by the government "are not acceptable."

So I say to you: Shame on you. I would think that after 100 years of Treaty 9 and 100-plus years of colonization of the First Nations people of this province, we would at

least for once give them a fair shake. But we couldn't do that in this legislation. I say to my friends: A sad thing.

The other point I want to make with regard to the governance model and LHINS is that I want people to understand that LHIN 13, where I come from, basically goes from North Bay to Hudson Bay, from the Quebec border all the way east, to the other side of Elliot Lake, at least, past Sault Ste. Marie. It's bigger than my riding, bigger than the Speaker's riding, bigger than Mike Gravelle's riding and a few others put together.

Here's the scenario. First of all, the LHINs are not elected. Nobody went to the First Nations and said, "Would you choose who's going to come and represent your communities at the table when it comes to health planning?" Instead, the government says, "We're going to appoint whoever we want to appoint." Now, they haven't appointed a bad guy in Norm Wesley. I have confidence in him. He's a good appointee, but he's one voice on the LHIN and he's going to be there, trying to advocate for health services on James Bay. You tell me how one person, with no allies as far as where he comes from—people who understand the journey of the First Nations, when it comes to services in their communities, are going to be able to be effective on the LHIN board. There's no makeup on that board, the way they set it up, that says, "We're going to make it so that the First Nations have some control over what happens," all of this in the midst of the integration of the health—the federal hospital, Weeneebayko, in Moose Factory, and James Bay General in Moosonee were in the process of amalgamating the federal and provincial hospitals on James Bay. You would think that the government, in the middle of that exercise, would at least, within the LHINs, make sure there's a fair process for James Bay and other First Nations across the north, and other parts of the province, to be heard in this process. I say to you again, shame.

L'autre point que je veux faire, monsieur le Président, fait affaire avec des services en français et comment cela affecte la communauté francophone dans cette province. Je vais être bien clair. Il y a un couple de points que je veux faire sur ce point-là.

Premièrement, la communauté francophone est venue devant ce comité et elle a été très claire. Elle a dit au comité : « On veut avoir une déclaration très claire dans la législation, au préambule, qui dise que les services en français vont être garantis et qu'on va être respecté dans ce processus. Ma collègue M^{me} Martel a amené des amendements directement à l'Assemblée, et je les ai seulement en anglais : « recognizing the role of Franco-Ontarians in the planning and delivery of health services in our communities. » Il y a une copie en français mais je ne l'ai pas avec moi présentement. Elle a introduit cette motion parce que la communauté francophone a été très claire. Elle a demandé : « On a besoin d'être respecté dans ce processus-là. On est un des peuples fondateurs. On était un des peuples qui ont créé cette nation appelée le Canada, avec nos autochtones et avec les anglophones et autres, et on veut être respecté comme on a le droit

d'être respecté sous la Charte canadienne des droits et la constitution canadienne.

Le gouvernement a dit : « Non, on ne le fait pas. Ce qu'on va faire, on va mentionner dans la législation que le ministre doit créer un conseil qui va aller consulter pour se faire dire quoi faire quand ça vient aux services pour les francophones de la province de l'Ontario. Une fois qu'ils consultent, c'est bien simple; ça marche comme ceci : M. Smitherman dit : « Je veux que vous vous penchiez sur la question telle et telle, » ce conseil qu'il va appointer. Le conseil travaille très fort et fait une recommandation au ministre. Le ministre n'a aucune obligation d'accepter ce qui a été dit. À la fin de la journée, il peut faire ce qu'il veut. Les francophones disent que ce n'est pas assez bien. On sait comme communauté qu'on se fait avaler par les institutions unilingues et même par les institutions bilingues, et qu'on a besoin d'avoir une fonction francophone pour être capable de déterminer nos services.

L'autre grosse crainte de la communauté est toute la question d'amalgamation. On a présentement, par exemple, des centres de santé communautaires comme à Sudbury, à Kapuskasing et dans d'autres communautés. On a des services—par exemple, des agences de santé mentale comme à Hearst, à la Soo, à Iroquois Falls et à Kapuskasing. Ce sont des organisations francophones. Ce ne sont pas des organisations bilingues. L'administration est en français, le service est donné en français, c'est pour les francophones, géré par les francophones et entretenu par la communauté francophone. Pourquoi? Pour reconnaître la réalité de la communauté francophone. Une crainte des agences francophones est la possibilité, dans cette législation-là, qu'un gouvernement arrive et dit : « Écoute, vous autres, votre petit groupe francophone dans votre agence à Kapuskasing ou à Hearst, vous êtes un peu trop petits. On va avoir des efficacités et on va vous mettre avec un groupe de Timmins ou avec un groupe de Kirkland Lake. Éventuellement ils deviennent, à la place d'une organisation francophone, une organisation bilingue. Ceci veut dire, à la fin de la journée, qu'on perd notre autonomie comme groupe pour gérer nos services. La communauté a vraiment peur de ça. C'est dans la section 28 du projet de loi.

Un autre point est toute la question des services en français. On sait qu'une fois qu'on délaisse les services du ministère de la Santé à aller à une agence—par exemple le gouvernement dit : « On crée des LHINs, et eux vont aller créer un système de santé dans notre région. Et eux autres disent : « Nous, on va privatiser un service tel et tel dans le système de santé, on va dire des hôpitaux. On va privatiser le service de laboratoire. » Ça veut dire qu'il n'y a aucune responsabilité de la part du gouvernement pour s'assurer que ces services sont donnés en français. Quand c'est dans la province, ça tombe sous la Loi 8. Une fois que c'est transféré dans une autre agence quelque part, privé ou même public, qui n'est pas directement au gouvernement, il n'est plus sous la Loi 8. La communauté dit : « Écoute, on a une grosse crainte quand ça vient à ça parce que, à la fin de la

journée, on peut se trouver avec une réduction de services en français avec l'échéance du temps avec cette nouvelle organisation des LHINs.

L'autre point est toute la question de représentation. On n'a aucune assurance qu'il va y avoir un noyau francophone sur les LHINs, pour s'assurer qu'ils sont là pour travailler pour la communauté francophone—et c'est un peu le même problème des autochtones et autres, où ils vont se trouver minoritaires dans une organisation qui est nommément bilingue, mais vraiment une organisation anglophone—et comment eux autres vont aller retrouver leurs services, et s'assurer des services à la communauté francophone, quand ils n'ont pas une habileté de contrôler ce qui se passe aux LHINs.

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The other point I want to make very quickly is the whole issue of what this means to small-town and rural Ontario. Mr. Runciman raised the point, and I think it's a very good one. My friend Mr. Gravelle will know as well as I that we have worked long and hard to provide health services in communities across this province. We want to make sure that people in Kapuskasing, Smooth Rock Falls, Hearst and Moosonee are able to get service as much as humanly possible in the communities.

One of the problems with the LHINs is they will regionalize the services. It'll centralize them in a larger regional centre. I'm going to tell you what's going to happen over a period of time: We're going to start transferring a lot of the administration of our programs into larger regional centres—Sudbury, North Bay, Timmins or wherever it might be—and the smaller communities are going to lose the ability to have a say about what services are delivered in their own communities, and I will argue that when it comes to front-line services, those will also start to be regionalized. Then the bean counters are going to come in and say, "Well, there are only five patients using this service in Kapuskasing. If we told them to drive down to Timmins, which is only two hours down the road, they can get service at a much more reasonable cost to the taxpayer." Eventually, these LHINs will want to save money, and they're going to try to save money by regionalizing both the administration and front-line services. For small-town Ontario, for rural Ontario, for northern Ontario, that is bad, bad policy. We need to not regionalize and not centralize. We need to make sure that we give actual control to the local communities.

I have 34 seconds. I have a lot to say, but I'll only say this: A Liberal government in opposition that decried, every chance they had, time allocation by the Tories said they would not do it. They promised in the election and put in their platform that they would have a democratic process, that members would have the right to have their say, that they wouldn't use time allocation. Like all promises Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal caucus made in that last election: broken. Here were are, time allocating legislation that clearly, to the people up here, who have come in big numbers from hospitals across Toronto to watch this debate, are saying, like me, "Shame on the

Liberal government for bringing forward this legislation without proper consultation and then ramming it through by time allocation."

Mr. Tascona: I'm certainly pleased to follow the comments of my colleague from Timmins—James Bay to deal with this time-allocation motion, which is essentially to shut down debate with respect to Bill 36, An Act to provide for the integration of the local system for the delivery of health services, which is code for—and we talked about this before. "Integration" is downsizing, and probably downsizing the front-line workers with respect to health care services in this province.

One area where I think that rings true is when you go through the bill and the amendments that were brought in. Under "Other employees," which is section 11 of the bill, it says, "A local health integration network may employ the employees, other than a chief executive officer, that the network considers necessary for the proper conduct of the business of the network.... The employees employed under subsection (1) are not civil servants or public servants within the meaning of the Public Service Act." The government is making it very clear that the employees that are employed by these LHINs are not going to be part of the provincial government. They're going to be a separate entity unto themselves.

One area that caught my eye in terms of what we've been dealing with, and I think last week when we were debating this bill, when the minister was here in the House, was his frustration with respect to bringing forth this particular piece of legislation three years into their mandate, bringing forth a system of the CEOs and the boards of directors and the bill isn't even in place. They're going ahead with bringing in a structure to fundamentally change the health care system and they don't even have a bill or authority to do that.

I brought a contempt motion with respect to that to the House. I don't agree with the Speaker's ruling on that day—the former Speaker, Mr. Curling—with respect to saying, "You don't need legislation in place to go ahead and do something." They didn't have any legislation in place, and they went ahead and put together these LHINs operations in terms of the CEOs and the boards of directors. What was frustrating in being a member of the government agencies committee, where they bring forward all these appointments to the different LHINs, whether they're the CEOs or whether they're the board of directors, was that none of them knew anything of what they were required to do. They did not have any knowledge of what they were expected to do, they had no knowledge of what the LHINs were going to do, and they had no knowledge of where they were going with respect to the mandate that they'd been given once they got their appointment. It was a complete blank cheque in terms of what was going on, with no knowledge. One had to question whether they were even qualified for the positions in the first place, because they didn't even know what they were going to be doing. That stands forth to date. When we interviewed someone last week with respect to the

board of directors in the LHINs, they didn't have a clue about what they were going to be doing.

So that's very frustrating. I'm as frustrated as the minister, who has brought forth legislation to justify everything that he has done when in fact he didn't have any legislation to do anything. It's quite interesting that you can go ahead with authority—you're supposed to have statutory authority to bring forth all these changes. The Liberal government didn't even have any, and they have the nerve to come forth and say, "Well, we can do it; we'll bring forth a bill later." So here we are with Bill 36, and they're shutting down debate. They don't want to have any more debate on this, because they're so far behind in terms of their agenda to try to bring this forth that they've got to do it now.

One thing that really frustrates me, though, in terms of this bill is the phoniness, the complete misrepresentation in the bill and in the speaking with respect to transparency. You read the amendments:

"Public meetings

"(4) All meetings of the board of directors of a local health integration network and its committees shall be open to the public."

That sounds well and good, but then you go to subsection 9(5), "Exceptions." There are more exceptions than you possibly could have. I'm going to read a few of them, because it just makes this a joke in terms of transparency, because there isn't any transparency. You could use any one of these sections, and there are about 10 subsections that deal with "Exceptions" under "Public meetings"—you could use every one and you could shut the public out with respect to what's going on with the local health integration networks.

Isn't the purpose of transparency and public meetings to know what's going on with respect to the institution, the agency that you're dealing with, so you know what's going on and so the public knows what actually is going to happen to affect their health care service? We're not talking about anything more fundamental in a person's life than the health care service that they're going to receive.

The exceptions that they've got in there are unbelievable:

"(a) financial, personal or other matters may be disclosed of such a nature that the desirability of avoiding public disclosure of them in the interest of any person affected or in the public interest outweighs the desirability of adhering to the principle that meetings be open to the public"—in other words, "We can't disclose this to the public because it wouldn't be very good for the public to know."

The other part of it is, "(b) matters of public security will be discussed." That's an exception with respect to public meetings.

Another one is, "(c) the security of the members or property of the network will be discussed."

The next one is, "(d) personal health information, as defined in section 4 of the Personal Health Information Protection Act ... will be discussed;

"(e) a person involved in a civil or criminal proceeding may be prejudiced;

"(f) the safety of a person may be jeopardized;

"(g) personnel matters involving an identifiable individual, including an employee of the network, will be discussed;

"(h) negotiations or anticipated negotiations between the network and a person, bargaining agent or party to a proceeding or an anticipated proceeding relating to labour relations or a person's employment by the network will be discussed;

"(i) litigation or contemplated litigation....

"(j) matters prescribed for the purposes of this clause will be discussed"—what the heck that means, I have no idea. Then, finally,

"(k) the network will deliberate whether to exclude the public from a meeting, and the deliberation will consider whether one or more of clauses (a) through (j) are applicable to the meeting."

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So, in other words, if they want to exclude the public, they can exclude the public from the meeting to decide whether they want to exclude the public and decide on which reason they're going to use to exclude the public. That's really fair: "We're going to have a meeting to exclude the public, and then we're going to decide in that meeting whether we want to exclude the public, and then we're going to decide what reason we want to use to exclude the public." That's really a good provision. Why don't they just say, "We don't want the public involved in our meetings"? Why go through this charade of saying, "We want the meetings to be open to the public. This is transparent," when they fully know that it's not transparent.

Everybody here in this Legislature knows what's going on. They're shutting down debate because they want to get this farce moving, because everybody they've appointed to the government agencies doesn't know what they're doing. They've now got legislation that will allow them to start this process and nobody knows where this process is going, other than the fact that we know we're going to have less health care than we have now with respect to this process.

I'm going to be sharing my time with the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke with respect to this debate. I look forward to his comments.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate on the time allocation motion?

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): I was sitting back there waiting for the government to respond, but they have not.

We don't have a whole lot of time here, and we could go on about the time allocation motion itself, which is terrible, and the fact that the member for Don Valley West earlier spoke about the previous government using time allocation. Those folks over there spouted against it. They professed that it was absolutely wrong. But now, in government, they're using it on a more and more frequent basis. In fact, they tabled another time allocation

motion today that will be debated tomorrow. That's quite regrettable, because it removes the elected members of this assembly from proper debate in this House. That is regrettable.

Let's talk about the LHINs for a moment. There's so much confusion out there about the LHINs, and the average person really has not been able to get the kind of information that is necessary to draw the conclusions that they should be able to draw about whether or not this is good for health or not. In fact, people who are stakeholders in the health care system have had a hard time trying to understand what these things are all about.

I spoke to people, for example, in the Alzheimer Society the other day; Kathy Wright, I believe, is her name. I have her letter here somewhere. She's very concerned about the powers that the minister has in this bill under section 28, virtually unfettered powers on the part of the minister. That's not what a working system and a workable system is all about. A bill centralizing all this power in the Minister of Health's office is not healthy—no pun intended. Those are some very serious concerns about section 28. There are equally serious concerns about the size of these LHINs. I'm part of the Champlain LHIN, which stretches from Hawkesbury almost to Algonquin Park and up to Deux Rivières. It's massive, it's huge. Do you think that decisions that are pertinent to Deep River or Barry's Bay are going to get a proper airing in a LHIN of that size? It's going to be dominated by the big Ottawa hospitals.

My gosh, I have so much respect for the Ottawa hospitals. They do such a great job, and it is the place where people in Barry's Bay and Renfrew and Pembroke go for tertiary care. But that does not mean we should be cut out of the system. I'm concerned that if the minister has the power to make a decision that he's going to shut down a particular service at St. Francis Memorial Hospital in Barry's Bay, he can do that, and that service will be just shifted to another hospital.

The problem is that we don't have the transportation network to get them there conveniently. I see the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation. If they get working on Highway 17, that might help a little bit, but it's the distance. I think that the minister has the ability to deny services to rural people, and what we see from this government every day is more and more denial of the reality of rural Ontario; for example, the gas tax bill that I proposed being ignored by this government.

LHINs, again: very serious concerns about the impact that this may have. I have a letter here from Marianhill, a long-term-care centre in my riding. They are very concerned about the impact this could have on them as a not-for-profit long-term-care centre.

I have an article from the Pembroke Observer, again indicating that these local networks are anything but local. They're not local.

The minister talks on and on ad infinitum about bringing decisions back to the people. This is about putting the decisions into one person's lap, the minister

himself. He's going to have all the power. That's a very dangerous circumstance that we're creating.

I don't fault the government for making an attempt, and I accept that it's making an attempt, to get some control on health care spending in this province. I actually applaud them for that. Health care spending is something we do have to get control over, because this system is not sustainable if we don't make those kinds of efforts. But what they're doing here is taking the local people out of the decision-making process. Yes, they've appointed local people on the boards, but they're one voice on a big board representing their area. That's not going to be good enough. I have serious concerns about the ability of local people to get local health care and be part of the decision-making process within that LHIN. I have a copy of the bill here.

Mr. Tascona: You've got a minute. Keep going.

Mr. Yakabuski: I know we're running out of time, Mr. Speaker. Not only is it a time allocation motion, but I've been time allocated with the amount of time I get to speak within the context of this specific debate.

Our public health care system is at risk. Mattawa, Marathon, Marianhill—very upset about it. County of Renfrew—very concerned about the impact of the local health integration networks, Bill 36.

If there were two days to talk about this, we could keep talking about it. The problem is that this government here, this party here, has decided, against their own beliefs, that they're shutting down debate on this issue as they've shut down debate on other issues. They're going to shut down debate on another issue tomorrow. They just keep talking one thing and doing another. They're not respecting the people and they're not respecting the people in this House. This kind of behaviour has got to stop. This kind of bill, this local health integration network bill, is very serious in the repercussions it has for the people in Ontario, and going forward in history. I think a fulsome and complete debate is necessary, not one that is shut off, short-circuited.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion):

This is really a very basic question, why this legislation is before us: Do we want control of our local health care system by the public servants at Queen's Park and on University Avenue, or do we want local people making local decisions? This is really about decisions made by the community, in the community and for the community. It's a basic principle of democracy where you have a local decision-making process in place, which I think in our Champlain district is going to work very well.

The men and women who have put their names forward to serve on the LHINs are individuals of great distinction. It's regrettable that there have been individuals in this Legislature who have cast aspersions on these folks: Michel Lalonde, for instance, un grand bénévole qui vient de l'est de l'Ontario, est le président du comité; Jo-Anne Poirier, vice-présidente de Centraide, the vice-president of United Way; Dr. Rob Cushman, the CEO, who is extremely well regarded as the former chief medical officer of health for the city of Ottawa.

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Now, Ottawa, in particular, suffered tremendously under the Tory government. Let me just review some of the decisions made at Queen's Park that hurt our community. They closed the Riverside Hospital, which was the most efficiently run hospital in eastern Ontario. They closed the Grace Hospital, run by the Salvation Army. They tried to close the Montfort Hospital, yet a court order turned that decision back. They tried to close the CHEO cardiac unit, leaving only one such cardiac unit in the entire province. In fact, they have a great track record of closing hospitals from Queen's Park—28 hospitals under their reign of terror. That's the legacy of the Tory party, and they gutted health care, quite frankly. Who suffers when those decisions are made at Queen's Park without taking into account the local circumstances? It's the people of Ottawa, eastern Ontario. It's the patients.

Now the leader of the Tory party wants to go back to the future and cut even more health care dollars—\$2.4 billion dollars he wants to cut. What does that work out to? Among other things, it would be the closing of about 11 community-based hospitals. If you look at that logically from Ottawa's point of view, they can't close the Montfort Hospital because of the court order telling the Tories they couldn't do that. They can't close the Ottawa Hospital; that's the teaching hospital in the community. They're left with the Queensway Carleton Hospital in the west end of the city, the only hospital left that they could close. I'm going to ask the leader of the Conservative Party to explain in the upcoming by-election in Nepean—Carleton why he wants to close Queensway Carleton Hospital, one of the most efficient, well-run community-based hospitals in our community.

Quite frankly, I'm proud of the McGuinty government's record when it comes to health care. I'm proud of the decisions that we have taken, that we're going to transfer that decision-making authority to the local people. We saved the CHEO cardiac unit; we doubled the Montfort; we put a 21.5% increase to Queensway Carleton Hospital; we secured funding for a community health centre in Nepean, Osgoode and Rideau; we increased funding for the Pinecrest-Queensway community health centre; and we increased funding to the Old Forge, to the CCAC, to Meals on Wheels and to other agencies.

Local health integrated networks are about local decision-making. The decision should be made in the community, by the community and for the community. That's why I am supporting this particular piece of legislation.

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): I have to talk a little bit about what I find so disturbing about the anti-LHINs campaign. It is disturbing because it's misleading, and it's misleading people who are susceptible because they had to endure eight years of closing hospitals and firing nurses under the Tories. Prior to that, they had to endure the reopening of their collective agreements and the so-called social contract in Rae days. All the more reason not to take advantage of them but to make sure that they are given accurate, complete infor-

mation in context, the context being that we have demonstrated by our actions that we are committed to a strong, sustainable, responsible public health care system.

We have hired thousands more public servants in the health care field in the last two and a half years. We have bought back MRIs that the Tories sold to the private sector; they're back in public hands where they belong. We are funding hospice care for the first time ever in this province's history, including day programs, visiting nurses and residential hospices. We have uploaded public health costs. We have improved community health care. We are building new hospitals. We are rebuilding our most important public service, and I am so worried about the approach that has been taken in the anti-LHIN ad campaign.

I cannot for the life of me, given our record as a government compared to the previous two governments—the reasons why people on these benches ran, put their names on ballots—understand why this misleading is taking place. We have partnered in good faith with health care workers, as we have done with our teachers, as we have done with other public sector workers and with doctors. We have demonstrated a great respect for collective bargaining. We have demonstrated good faith, and goodwill and investment. There is nothing in this bill that would create any new circumstance whereby the public sector delivery of health care is going to be decimated as portrayed in these ads. I cannot believe that anyone in this province wants to return to the old days of the Tory slash and burn or the NDP social contracts.

Partner with us, just as Juanita Gledhill has partnered with us. She is the chair of my LHIN. She lost her job to competitive bidding put in place by the former government through the CCACs and the RFP process. She is a tireless advocate of public home care delivery and a strong opponent of the RFP put in by the former government. She is chair of my LHIN, appointed by this government. There's a nurse from Thorold and a hospital administrator on my LHIN. These are grassroots health care workers helping us make the best possible decisions about how to spend taxpayers' money responsibly in a health care system that will be the best possible and sustainable.

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I'd like us to think a little bit about the model that we have right now. The entire \$33-billion system is managed from Queen's Park. Queen's Park deals literally not with hundreds, but thousands of individual hospitals and individual health agencies. I find it very strange that the two opposition parties are criticizing us for moving to a different model, because if you look at education and you go back 30 or 40 years, we had the same model in education. We had the Ministry of Education dealing directly with little school boards that had one or two schools, and the Tories said, "Let's have county school boards." Then the NDP came along and said, "You know, that's not as efficient as it might be." The NDP did a study and said, "Let's set up local boards that are one county, two counties, three counties." Do you know what happened? The NDP lost the government, the Tories came back, and

they implemented that model where both opposition parties' definition of "local" is exactly the same thing as we're proposing: a catchment area of one, two or three counties. These people are not telling you the truth about what they did. We are simply imposing an efficient model that is still a local model on our health care system.

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Mr. Speaker, I want to say thank you very much for the privilege yet one more time. Over the last two years, I've had the privilege so many times on behalf of Ontarians to speak about their health care system in the context of the system that we wish to build alongside them. I want to say to all those viewers at home, however few or many they may be, that Fear Factor has come to an end, and we're now embarking, through this speech and in the work we'll do from here on out, where the rubber hits the road, to address the realities of building a health care system that for once puts the patients and community at the centre of that system.

I want to say hi to Christopher and let him know that I'm going to be home soon, because a new season of *Amazing Race* kicks off tonight. I rather think that I'm not really into so many reality shows, except I like that one an awful lot because it shows me places I'm unlikely ever to go, unless I become a Speaker or something. But it also shows the power of ambition, and speaking of—I won't go there quite yet.

I suppose some people might think it ironic, on a debate that brings a debate to a deliberate conclusion, that I'm proud to be here and doing that. We will work with the Legislature over the course of the next few days, but the discussion that has gone on in Ontario, cloaked, often in backrooms of health care provider organizations only for decades and decades, and which has evaded leadership, is no longer in search of it.

We came to office as a government in a province that stood out in a nation where every other part of the country had sought to develop a model of health care delivery centred around an understanding of what the population's health was in a distinct area. To draw a line on a map is to create the capacity within it to measure the health of the population and to hold accountable those who have the privilege of delivering medicare. I believe, and our government fundamentally believes, that medicare is the best expression of Canadian values. We believe patients should be at the centre of the system.

If we look at organizations in our province where we celebrate the results they produce—Cancer Care Ontario, the Cardiac Care Network, our stroke strategy—these are all accomplishments that evolved with regional nature at the heart of the success that is achieved for patients. That is in whose name we work and in whose name this bill is brought forward.

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Terry Sullivan is the president and CEO of Cancer Care Ontario. He said, "The local health integration network legislation introduced today demonstrates the gov-

ernment's commitment to improving local health care services. The cancer care community will work with the LHINs and the government to ensure quality care is available to all people as close to home as possible."

Countless hundreds of times in the almost two and a half years that I've had the privilege of this role, I have said to communities, large and many very small, that our government fundamentally believes that the best health care that can be found is that health care which is found as close to home as possible. When I hear the member from Timmins—James Bay stand in this place and evoke the name of Moosonee—when he and I stood alongside one another with a community that celebrated the repatriation of satellite dialysis services that allowed people to move back to that community, to those First Nations communities, from Timmins, Toronto and Kingston—and play the role of a fearmonger, I really worry. I worry about the service that the people of Ontario are getting from those who are so loyal to their role as opposition that they pretend their way through a debate. The opposition parties have pretended their way through this discussion, enabled particularly by some in organized labour, who have decided that the appropriate strategy was to fearmonger, was to rattle people, was to go to them and tell them that their jobs were at stake.

Today, the Premier had the privilege in this House to say many things about health care. One of those that he reported, and that we proudly report on as a Liberal government, is that under our government there are 13,000 more people working in health care than when we came to office in 2003. Our Premier said, in response to the Conservative Party leader, "I really fail to understand the leader of the official opposition's confidence in Ontario communities. What he is effectively saying throughout all of the criticism that he's levelled at our government in connection with local health integration networks is that he doesn't trust local communities to have influence for the first time in a real way when it comes to the delivery of health care in their community"—a say for local communities.

Where have the honourable members been transparent in their critiques of this bill—when they talk, as an example, of the so-called ministerial powers section? They pretend their way through this discussion. They pretend that we have not altered, in a way fundamental to the development of this system, the order and the responsibility for the determination of those ministerial power decisions. What we have in this bill is a circumstance where no minister can exercise discretion in those areas unless and until directed or requested to do so by a local health integration network.

I've heard both of these opposition parties say, "All those people you put on those boards, they're just a bunch of toadies. They're lackeys. They're just spokespeople for the government." I'm saddened by that. My colleague from Stoney Creek talked a minute ago about a woman named Juanita Gledhill, who is well known in the Hamilton area, who is serving as our board chair, and she referenced a nurse from Thorold, Ontario. I can assure

you that the nurse we appointed from Thorold, Ontario to the board of the local health integration network is no lackey of any Liberal government. She's not a partisan on behalf of our party. In fact, any simple investigation would lead to a conclusion that she's a community activist, strenuously supportive of a public medicare system and that she's a supporter of a political party other than mine. But we determined that she was an appropriate part of the mix, because as a front-line health care worker, who brings with her passion for medicare an understanding of the front-line challenges, she can make a contribution to the debate.

Imagine the powerhouse that is begun to be created when we bring nine people who have one thing in common. There is one element of their resumé that bears recognition: It is their fundamental commitment to their communities. These people have been drawn from the same organizations that the manufactured dissent of the opposition here has told us they will now choose to close. That is the circumstance that prevails here at Queen's Park.

I want to say to honourable members that I believe it's appropriate to consider just for a minute what a government has done as a measure of what it's appropriate to offer in terms of a criticism or a critique. We are, after all, a government that came to office and introduced as our very first piece of legislation as relates to health care a bill called the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act. We are a party that is proud to embrace the Canada Health Act, that stands in our province with two and a half years under our belt and a significant degree of progress in a lot of ways that matter a whole lot to the public health care system. We repatriated MRIs, we're building 40 new community health care centres, one of the most evolved models of primary care, and we're targeting those very directly to many of those communities in our province that experienced the greatest hardship with respect to access to health care.

We're building 150 family health teams that build on the interdisciplinary model that has been promoted by people like Roy Romanow. We delivered more midwives to Ontario, and we're building, with the hospice movement, a residential hospice capacity and a home hospice capacity that others all around the sophisticated world marvel at. We brought in a vaccination program that's going to provide a whole lot more opportunity to a lot of our most precious gifts, our kids. We worked very, very hard to build a newborn screening capacity to take Ontario from worst to first. We've worked tirelessly alongside hospitals and with nursing unions to enhance the percentage of nurses who are working full-time. We've hired more than 4,000 additional nurses in health care in the province of Ontario, according to Doris Grinspun.

Our values are reflected in our actions. We're not a government that stands by and says that a tide of private delivery is the answer. Today, we have a situation where those who make the boldest claims about how much they love medicare have their gunsights trained on the govern-

ment of Ontario, the same government that's just done all of those public health care enhancements and more.

Meanwhile, here is what's going on today and in the last number of days in the rest of the country. Today in Alberta, they introduced their new health policy framework. At the heart of it, it proposes two-tier medicine. It says in part that this new direction allows for greater flexibility and choice in how health care services are funded and delivered. That happened today in Alberta. It wasn't very long ago that we heard about the government of Quebec's response, on February 16, to the Chaoulli decision. Quebecers will now be permitted to purchase private health insurance to access care in private, for-profit clinics. In British Columbia on February 14, the government's throne speech said this: "Why are we so afraid to look at mixed health care delivery models, when other states in Europe and around the world have used them to produce better results for patients at lower costs to taxpayers?" You would think, not the quality but on the quantity of the rhetoric that has been trained upon us by those who make the boldest claims about their love for medicare, that we were in fact a government that was initiating reforms of that nature.

Mr. Tory in this very House, himself, is a proponent for these things. He believes that a Copeman-style medical clinic should be allowed to come to the province of Ontario. Mr. Tory has some reconciling to do. The reality is that he stands in his place and plays the role of opposition leader. I guess he does that well, but he has rejected all of the common sense that he had built his illustrious business career on. He has decided, like the New Democratic Party, that health care services in the province of Ontario should be delivered by high-cost providers. In Mr. Tory's case, this, just two weekend ago, was his commentary on the way health care should go in the province of Ontario. We don't agree.

I want to say that I think the real play is being missed here. What we're involved in is in a certain sense a little bit simple. We're creating a new kind of environment for health care in Ontario, one where, as an example, if there was to be a change that occurred related to the delivery of a health care service, if somebody had in mind to do that, it can't sneak up out of the blue. Someone can't wake up one morning and put it on a press release and make sure that it happens. There is now embedded in legislation an obligation placed on behalf of a local health integration network where they will have to develop an integrated health services plan. They will have a legislative obligation to consult on the development of that plan. They will have a legislative obligation to make that plan transparent by posting it in public places. They will have a legislative obligation to have a meeting, in a local community where they are deciding important decisions, in the full light of the public. I feel strenuously excited—strenuously excited—on behalf of the patients of the province of Ontario when we learn that, for once, the decisions about a health care system that, after all, is their health care system—then that, I think, is a great day.

2100

I think it's about time that those of us who believe in public health care be asked to put our ambitions forward. We're going to continue to work on our mission, a mission in search of what the patients of the province of Ontario want. We believe fundamentally in the public health care system, as I've said, but we also must recognize, those of us who do believe in it and have the obligation to make sure that it produces results where the rubber hits the road, that it's more than just talk and that it's backed up by action, that we deliver results.

There are a lot of people in the province of Ontario who believe as we do, fundamentally, in the public health care system, but some of them lose faith, some of them have their confidence shaken. It cannot always be only about how many more billions of dollars are required. When health care providers that are doing the same service in the same neighbourhood do not work together, then we have a problem, a failure to communicate.

We're creating a mechanism where health care services can be integrated, which means coordinated together. Everybody has decided instead to dredge up a Fear Factor kind of scenario that works for them in their desire to shake further the confidence in health care in this province and to create for workers in this province, who have, I would suspect, rather little to fear in an environment where each and every year health care spending rises by \$1 billion or \$2 billion—80% of all the dollars we spend in health care is paid to people who work in health care. Health care spending is rising. Accordingly, the trend line is already established, and it is for employment security in a broad sense, in terms of the broad number of people who are working there. And still, union leadership determines that they should scare union membership by going to them and telling them that if this bill passes, they will be fired. But I ask you this: What is their motivation for having people all riled up? And where have they been negligent? They have been negligent, I believe, in deliberately misunderstanding a bill.

I want to ask a question. I have had scenario after wild scenario presented by a variety of different people: If the Alzheimer Society of Toronto is getting 6% or 8% of its budget from the Ministry of Health, the minister could exercise powers to shut it down or merge it. Hooey. Firstly, you've got to ask, are the honourable members involved in such mischief-making that they would manufacture and concoct a storyline that is so far out of touch with common sense? I ask you this: If you understand the bill, if you even bothered to read the bill, if you bothered to try and understand the alteration that has occurred here, where we put people from local communities at the front of the decision-making train for once, why would they come forward with such a proposal? Well, these are the kinds of stories that have been manufactured, to the delight of those on the other side of the aisle.

I want to take a minute to read into the record, because I'm so proud of them, the names of just a few of the people who represent and reflect community who have come forward to stand and be members of local health

integration networks. There is this fantastic guy whom I had the privilege of getting to know, Foster Loucks. He's the chair of the Central East LHIN. He was the CEO of Haliburton Highlands Health Services from 1995 to 2002, a fantastic organization that Laurie Scott is a proud supporter of that does tremendous work in delivering community support services and the like. Before that, he served as the administrator of Lakehead Psychiatric Hospital from 1986 to 1995, before that as executive director of the Thunder Bay district health council, as past trustee of the Ontario Hospital Association and a past member of the Thunder Bay children's aid society.

These are the kind of people who, for their own purposes, the opposition members, knowing it wasn't true, have manufactured—the private conversations are, “Oh, yeah. I know this person or that person; they're fantastic.” The public presentation is, “These boards are loaded with a bunch of lackeys of the government.” I am fundamentally concerned that people of good conscience in the province of Ontario who are willing to put themselves on what everybody would agree is a real tough assignment have been disparaged by a deliberate manufacturing and misrepresentation of the kind of quality they represent.

Here in the Central East LHIN, from Scarborough, Novina Wong. That name may be familiar: a Chinese Canadian who currently serves as a management consultant. Previously, she served as clerk of the city of Toronto, clerk of the municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, and in various other administrative and executive positions at the municipal level. Community service includes the board of the Scarborough Hospital, the Chinese outreach service of the Scarborough Hospital, the community advisory board of the Scarborough Mirror and the Toronto Board of Trade city governance task force. She sounds to me like a person who has a distinguished history and career in public service and in service to community—disparaged and written off by opposition members in a deliberate attempt to manufacture a storyline that's just not accurate.

I want to talk about one or two more, because I had so many opportunities to meet these fantastic folks. In the Champlain LHIN, the area that stretches from Cornwall and up the Ottawa Valley and includes the great city of Ottawa—I can't believe I said that.

Hon. Mr. Watson: Great hockey players.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Yes, this year—owned by Toronto money.

The chair of the local health integration network: Michel Lalonde. He retired as chief executive officer of the Hawkesbury and District General Hospital and the Winchester District Memorial Hospital. He is very active in his community and participates on numerous boards and committees. This guy brings such tremendous capacity, knowledge and passion. He loves public health care. He's got a demonstrated capacity around it, but not good enough for the honourable members opposite.

How about up in northwestern Ontario? We've got John Whitfield. He's the chair of our LHIN. He was the vice-president of research and development at Lakehead

University, the interim president, the dean of arts and science. He served on various boards, including the Thunder Bay Community Foundation, Contact North and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine.

These are examples of the people in the province of Ontario, committed and dedicated to the values of the public health care system, who put their hand up and said, "I am willing to serve. Not only am I willing to serve, but I'm willing to engage myself in a mission related to the importance of preserving and protecting for future generations our treasured health care system." This is a challenging mission. Alongside it, these people agreed that they would make their decisions in the full light of day, in a room with their peers and their neighbours and taxpayers and patients, and exercise their good conscience and understanding of community.

Part of that good conscience needs to be a clinical good conscience. It's time for a little honesty in the discussion about health care. It has been a circumstance where no Minister of Health should dare speak about the clinical circumstances which might dictate that it is in the interest of the patient to have some consolidation of services. No Minister of Health dare say that. "That is an acknowledgment of your secret plan to close this, that and the other thing." This is a message that is perpetuated by those who, once again, make the strongest claims that they are the protectors of medicare.

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In 1981, I had my wisdom teeth taken out in a hospital. There are those among the status quo set who still believe that this is the place to do that kind of thing. We have circumstances where the provision of a service is occurring in such a small quantity that the capacity, the safety, associated with it is no longer appropriate for a health care system that sets and has standards as high as ours. No one who wants to be in a province that has a cutting-edge, first-class health care system wants to set up a circumstance where every service is provided on every street corner and in every hospital.

Imagine a scenario that goes something like this. In the province of Ontario we have hip and knee surgery at almost 60 hospitals. Imagine tomorrow that there was a new piece of technology available and it cost \$300,000, a not unreasonable sum for a technological development in health care today. Are we in Ontario in the best position to take advantage of such technology on a platform that is a mile wide or nine tenths of a mile wide?

It seems to me that if we want—and I know we do—if we fundamentally want to deliver on the promise and especially on the expectation of a high-quality, high-performing health care system, then for once and for all in our province we must give real life and meaning to the word "system." The reality is that our government inherited the collective government response to health care, not of one party but of all parties. This is, after all, our health care system, the people's health care system, and the health care "system" that we inherited was not performing like a system at all.

If you believe in public health care as we do, then you believe fundamentally that a health care system should deliver an equitable result to health care. It was not, and I asked hard questions about why. Why were we tolerating a circumstance where the Ontario health care system that our government took over from eight and a half years of Conservatives couldn't even tell us how many cancer surgeries it was performing in a year? Why? Why would we tolerate a circumstance where our health care system was producing a 50-week wait for an MRI in Barrie, Ontario, and a three-week wait at another hospital in the greater Toronto area? Why would we tolerate that? Why did we have a circumstance, when our government came to office, where Ottawa was the forgotten land when it came to access to MRIs? Doesn't it stand as rather ironic that our nation's capital, a place where technology has been one of the engines that made that economy roar, was left behind by successive governments that did not invest in their technological needs like MRI? I'm proud to be part of a government that has given a system response to that. Now we have a wait-time strategy. The MRI machine is running all night long in Barrie and we've announced a new machine for Orillia. But only when you draw a line on a map, only when you start to measure the population health and services being provided there, only when you get to the accountability point where you actually get the answer to the question "How long is the wait?" can you start to address this in a fashion which reflects the fundamental principle that a public health care system belongs to the public.

I want to say that we as Liberals are motivated as a political party by leaders like Laurier, by leaders like Trudeau, who established for our party a sense of ambition, an understanding that in Canada there is the potential to be able to unlock and unravel any mystery. But we believe fundamentally that there's no mystery to it at all. It suits a few people, the establishment, like the establishment opposition party over here. They like the system the way it is because they know the system the way it is. But the disrespect that that member is showing at present is nothing compared to the disrespect that his party shows for the patients of the province of Ontario and it's nothing compared to the disrespect that his party shows for the people of the province of Ontario.

Fundamentally, we believe in health care. We believe in public health care. We recognize, and I do in every speech that I give in every hospital and community-based organization, that health care is this most special service, not just like any other public service, not just about the delivery of care but about the tremendous expression of love that goes alongside that care. We are grateful, and we stand in our place and we say it and we celebrate public service. To those people in the gallery tonight, many of whom are front-line health care providers, we salute you and we celebrate the work you do. That's why we're proud to stand before you as a government and to acknowledge that we have hired more than 13,000 additional health care workers since our government came to light. We're proud of the fact that we work to put

more health care workers on the front line, to bring more nursing.

But we also recognize something else. We recognize that at the end of the day, the medicare system is not something to be treated lightly. It is not something that one can choose to get a little emotionally attached to. It's time in our province to engage all of our capacity, the head and the heart and the goodwill of local community, to make sure that we make decisions in a fashion which makes sense if we want to ensure that for future generations this great gift of Canada is available, this medicare system, this expression of our values.

I am not one of those who is prepared to stand idly by and leave that to chance. There are twin threats to our health care system. They can be found on the one hand by those who have such strenuous economic demands that they would outstrip our capacity to resource the system. But there is another demon that lurks, and it is the demon of loss of confidence. It is here where we have the obligation to recognize that there are many in our province, many patients, many residents that we all know, who grow somewhat impatient with the public health care system and who wish to see, through accountability and through a commitment to results, that this great gift of Canada can be sustained for future generations, that we can build on the work of Tommy Douglas and Roy Romanow and Monique Bégin and that we can do this in the name of public health care and entrusting billions of dollars of this resource to people from local communities on the fundamental principle that they can best establish local priorities. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Ramsay has moved notice of motion number 75. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2118 to 2128.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be counted by the Clerk.

Ayes

Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Matthews, Deborah	Qaadri, Shafiq
Brownell, Jim	Mauro, Bill	Ramsay, David
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Rinaldi, Lou
Delaney, Bob	Mitchell, Carol	Ruprecht, Tony
Di Cocco, Caroline	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Sandals, Liz
Dombrowsky, Leona	Oraziotti, David	Smith, Monique
Gravelle, Michael	Parsons, Ernie	Smitherman, George
Kular, Kuldip	Patten, Richard	Watson, Jim
Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Peterson, Tim	Wilkinson, John
Levac, Dave	Phillips, Gerry	Wynne, Kathleen O.

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be counted by the Clerk.

Nays

Barrett, Toby	Kormos, Peter	Runciman, Robert W.
Bisson, Gilles	Martel, Shelley	Tascona, Joseph N.
Hampton, Howard	Miller, Norm	Yakubski, John

The Deputy Clerk (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 30; the nays are 9.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It being past 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 2130.

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Norman W. Sterling, Kathleen O.Wynne
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No. 46A

N° 46A

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 1 March 2006

Mercredi 1^{er} mars 2006

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 1 March 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 1^{er} mars 2006

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PERCY DWIGHT WILSON

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): It is with pride that I rise to inform the House today of one of Oshawa's most distinguished citizens, Percy Dwight Wilson.

On Sunday I attended Mr. Wilson's 105th birthday celebration at Cedarcroft Place in Oshawa, along with family, friends and numerous honoured guests paying tribute and wishing him well.

Mr. Wilson enlisted in the army against his parents' wishes at the age of 15, far younger than the eligible age limit, and he is now the youngest of Canada's two remaining World War I veterans still living in Canada. The teen had felt it was his duty to sign up, and was shipped off to England. When his age was discovered, Mr. Wilson was soon returned home. He also tried to get involved in World War II but was refused as he was too old at 40, and instead rose to the rank of captain in the Perth Regiment.

Following the Great War, Mr. Wilson once performed at Toronto's Massey Hall as a professional singer before going on to work for Bell Canada for some 47 years before retiring in 1966.

Mr. Wilson says the secret to long life is honesty, faith and clean living. He has always tried to be fair and tell the truth, has never smoked, and always attended church on a regular basis.

It's a privilege to rise today to recognize this outstanding gentleman's dedication and the commitment he has demonstrated toward his family, friends, community, province and country. I am honoured to have had the opportunity to meet and speak with him. I would like to ask all to join me in congratulating Mr. Dwight Wilson, on him being 105 years young.

OLYMPIC ATHLETES

Mr. Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay–Atikokan): I rise today to recognize and congratulate Thunder Bay's winter Olympians who participated in this year's Olympic Winter Games.

Katie Weatherston played for Canada's women's hockey team, which defeated Sweden 4-1 in the finals to

win an Olympic gold medal. Weatherston began playing hockey at the age of five in Thunder Bay, and she now plays for the Big Green at Dartmouth College. As one of two rookies on the Canadian Olympic women's hockey team, she will almost certainly become a leader in women's hockey.

Amber Peterson represented Canada in freestyle skiing aeriels. After grabbing her first-ever World Cup medal, a silver, in January 2006 in Lake Placid, she has vaulted into the top 10 in the World Cup standings this season. We look forward to seeing Amber in Vancouver four years from now.

Sean Crooks represented Canada by competing in cross-country skiing. Crooks has been racing competitively for more than a decade. He enjoyed a successful career as a junior, claiming national titles in consecutive years, and twice finished in the top 20 at the world junior sprint championships.

Eric Staal, while not seeing any ice time in Turin, made the Canadian Olympic three-man alternate squad. Staal plays in the NHL for the Carolina Hurricanes and was selected second overall in the 2003 NHL entry draft. He has already scored many points in his first two years and is fast becoming one of the most exciting young offensive hockey players in the world.

Also worth noting is Curt Harnett, who has been chosen to join the Canadian Olympic Hall of Fame and will be inducted at a ceremony in Quebec City on April 29. Harnett is a three-time medallist in cycling, has won over 30 national titles, and has represented Canada in four Olympic Games.

As you can see, there's no shortage of world-class athletes coming out of Thunder Bay. On behalf of Thunder Bay, I'd like to recognize their tireless training and outstanding athletic accomplishments. We are extremely proud of them for representing us at the Olympic Games.

HIGHWAY 12

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I would like to draw the attention of this House to a severe problem that I have in the riding of Simcoe North and another example of the McGuinty government's neglect of municipalities in rural Ontario.

While this House debates the integrity of Transportation Minister Takhar, citizens in my riding of Simcoe North continue to drive over one of the roughest and most unsafe roads in our province: Highway 12 between

Coldwater and Orillia. I can tell you it is simply a disgrace. Whether you are driving a motorcycle, a car, a tractor, a bus or a tractor-trailer, you can be sure that Highway 12 will provide you with the roughest road of any provincial highway in our province.

Last fall during estimates, when I questioned the minister and ministry staff on the status of the redevelopment of this portion of Highway 12, their answer was that the project was ready to proceed this spring, provided the funds are available. Well, when the minister can find time to do his job as Minister of Transportation, I would ask that he take the time to actually travel this portion of Highway 12.

Simcoe North feels neglected by the McGuinty government. While the McGuinty government is slashing more than 680 jobs at the Huronia Regional Centre in Orillia, the citizens of Simcoe North are seeing absolutely nothing to compensate for the economic impact. One first step would be to allow the construction of Highway 12 to proceed this spring. No more studies; no more excuses. We want to see Highway 12 completed. While the Premier has lowered the standards for integrity for his cabinet, the standards for highway safety are also being lowered. It is time, this spring, to proceed with construction. The citizens of Simcoe North are not second-class citizens. They work hard to pay their taxes and they pay for the licensing of their vehicles. They expect—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

Mr. Dunlop:—it to be completed this spring.

The Speaker: Thank you. Members' statements.

1340

TOBACCO SMUGGLING

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): Well, the wonderful thing is, there is a clock and I am protected.

I want to raise for the members of the House an issue that I think is fast becoming a problem probably for a lot of constituencies out there, and that is the issue of tobacco smuggling. I have been contacted by a number of stores, confectionaries, from across my riding who are starting to note that there is an awful amount of contraband cigarettes that are now coming in on the black market and being sold out of the back of pickup trucks, whatever way people are able to sell these.

What astonishes me is the degree to which there seems to be an inability on the part of this government to deal with this. I understand it's a bit of a complex issue as far as how you deal with it. On the one hand, you don't want to lower the cigarette tax, because you certainly don't want to encourage people to smoke, for all kinds of good reasons, but it seems to me that the provincial government has got to do something about the whole issue of coming at it from the enforcement side to try to find some way to deal with the contraband.

I've been contacted by stores from Hearst to Kapuskasing to Timmins and various places. I've chatted with Guy Monet and a number of other people I know, Ron

Lévesque and others, who are saying it's a real issue. They are noting that sales have gone down by about 30% in competition with the contraband cigarettes. I urge this government to do something on the enforcement side to deal with this issue so that we are able to make sure that cigarette sales are done in the open and that the government takes this issue seriously.

MOHAWK COLLEGE

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): I rise in the House today with wonderful news for Hamilton West and for the Ontario Legislature. I would like to acknowledge and congratulate Mohawk College and their students' association for receiving the Ontario Spirit Tsunami Award, recognizing their outstanding tsunami relief effort. After the devastating 2004 tsunami, several countries were in dire need of assistance. In the spirit of goodwill, the world responded. There was an outpouring of financial and material support that was a testament to Ontario's compassion and big heart.

The Ontario Spirit Tsunami Award was designed to acknowledge an individual or group that makes a significant contribution towards the tsunami relief effort. The award's motto is "Commitment to action and generosity," and that is exactly what Mohawk College and their students' association exemplified in the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami. The collaboration between the Mohawk Students' Association and Mohawk College could not have been better. In an effort to raise funds and awareness, the students' association and the college had a week-long loose change drive, a 12 Hours of Caring marathon on the college radio station, and heavy coverage of the disaster in the college newspaper to gain public support for the initiative.

It was a proud moment when students' association president Kyle Smith presented a cheque for \$4,500 to the Red Cross on January 11, 2005, and it's a very proud moment now for me to pay tribute to these fine young men and young women for their dedication and compassion on behalf of all Mohawk College and their students' association toward this wonderful humanitarian tsunami relief effort.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): Tractors are rolling once again today to wake this government up to the farm crisis. The tractors are rolling in Huron county along Highway 8 between Clinton and Goderich. The Ontario farm protests are only growing in frequency as this government continues to turn a blind eye.

I've been asking questions for the last five months for action from this government on the farm turmoil that we see represented over in Huron. Even last week, we continued to hear the blame-game answer from the Minister of Agriculture, and I quote: "It would appear that the federal government is not eager to move as swiftly as we

are.” Well, farmers are telling us that they are swiftly receiving the federal cheques. They’re taking the federal money to the bank, to the fertilizer warehouse, to their seed dealer. The question is, where is the Ontario government? The feds are sending out the cheques. The grain and oilseeds deadline is real: March 9, a commitment on risk management. And it’s not just cash crop farmers; it’s beef, horticulture, tobacco, cull cow, dead-stock, export dairy heifer, even the production of honey.

Interjection.

Mr. Barrett: I’ll make this simple for the member opposite: Farmers feed cities. Farmers require action. Farmers require action now.

DEFIBRILLATION EQUIPMENT

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): Speaker, as you know, yesterday I introduced a private member’s bill, now numbered Bill 71, that will remove concerns about liability for those who either use or have in their places of business heart defibrillators. I’m told that 80% of the reason for these defibrillators not being placed in public places is because of the concern over liability.

Not so long ago, my colleague Mike Colle, now the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, introduced a similar bill. In the interim, it was brought to everyone’s attention, I think, by the fact that a defenceman for the Detroit Red Wings, Jiri Fischer, had an event, a cardiac arrest, during a hockey game. Dr. Tony Colucci said, “The AED monitor that was at the scene ... any layperson can apply it; it’s fairly simple.”

Currently, AED monitors are not mandatory in most sports venues. Hockey legend Wayne Gretzky, now coach of the Phoenix Coyotes, said he would like to see that change. So that is the intent of my bill: to allay the fears of those who may use these to save lives in Ontario.

PARALYMPIC WINTER GAMES

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): I rise today to speak about an exciting international sporting event taking place in Torino now that the Winter Olympics are done. The Paralympic Games are on from March 10 to 19, and Ontario has another strong contingent of athletes on the Canadian team. These are athletes from Ontario competing in wheelchair curling, sledge hockey, alpine skiing and other events.

In 2002, our Paralympic athletes won 19 medals at the Salt Lake City games. We are all confident that they will be able to build on that record this time around. All Ontarians are proud of the success of the Olympic team in Turin, but now we all have the opportunity to support our Paralympic athletes as well. As the next Olympic and Paralympic Games will be in Vancouver in 2010, this is an excellent opportunity to check out some of the Paralympic stars that we will no doubt be cheering on in favour of our great country.

The Canadian Paralympic Committee recently launched an Own the Podium-2010 campaign, which is aimed

at involving more people with physical disabilities in winter sports and making Canada a top-three medal winner in 2010.

At the recent No Limits dinner in Hamilton, I met Kelly Smith, who won a silver medal in the marathon at the 2004 Athens Paralympic Games. Kelly was certainly an inspiration and a good friend and is an excellent example of the dedication and excellence of all our Paralympic athletes.

I urge all of the members in this House and across the province to support our athletes competing in Torino.

HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): We on this side of the House are committed to revitalizing the public health care system.

In recent debates in this House on local health integration networks, we have heard a great deal of protest from the official opposition. Given the Tories’ record of gutting health care, I question whether their concerns are based on a sincere desire to improve the public health care system. I think they would rather see us sit on our hands, allow the system to deteriorate, and then point to our ailing hospitals and bulging wait times as reason enough to privatize the services altogether.

The third party is not much better, always advocating the most expensive route and paying no attention to the fact that our resources are stretched, needs are high and change is vital. The NDP formula for strengthening public health care by spending more than the government collects in revenue is certainly a recipe for further debt and deterioration.

Our government’s proposed local health integration networks would ensure that taxpayers’ health care dollars are spent in the most efficient and effective way possible, yielding the best results. I am proud of this government’s plan to reach out to local communities, empowering them with the means to identify their own health priorities and recommend the best way to deliver health care. Together with our community-based partners, we are moving forward, seeking new ways to deliver quality care to Ontarians and ensuring that the sustainability of the health care—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated March 1, 2006, of the standing committee on government agencies. Pursuant to standing order 106(e)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

1350

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CHRISTOPHER'S LAW (SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY) AMENDMENT ACT, 2006 LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT LA LOI CHRISTOPHER SUR LE REGISTRE DES DÉLINQUANTS SEXUELS

Mr. Martiniuk moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 73, An Act to protect our children from sexual predators by amending Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry), 2000 / Projet de loi 73, Loi visant à protéger nos enfants des prédateurs sexuels en modifiant la Loi Christopher de 2000 sur le registre des délinquants sexuels.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): Christopher's Law was so named in memory of an 11-year-old boy brutally murdered by a convicted pedophile on parole. Presently, under Christopher's Law, all sex offenders convicted of sex offences by Canadian courts must register in Ontario. My bill addresses two key concerns in the sex offender registry by providing for the first time that (1) sex offenders convicted by courts outside of Ontario and Canada would have to register under the act, and (2) the sex offender registry would be open to the public in addition to the police.

I believe my amendments would definitely provide additional protection to our children and give parents the necessary tools to protect their children.

SWIMMING POOL SAFETY ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ DES PISCINES

Mr. Rinaldi moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 74, An Act respecting safety around swimming pools / Projet de loi 74, Loi traitant de la sécurité autour des piscines.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): I'm happy to introduce the Swimming Pool Safety Act, 2006, as a private member's bill.

According to data from the Canadian Institute for Health Information, drowning is the second leading cause of accidental death among Ontario children under the age of five. For every child who drowned in 2002 and 2003 there were six to 10 more almost drowned requiring

hospitalization. Seventy-six per cent of children involved in drowning accidents were playing or walking near water when drowning or near-drowning occurred.

By requiring individuals to build fences around their pools, we can hopefully prevent some of these terrible accidents in Ontario. At the same time, this bill does not seek to create unnecessary burdens through duplication. That's why it includes a provision suggesting that individuals who live in municipalities that already have bylaws pertaining to fences around pools would not have to come into compliance with this bill.

I ask my colleagues to consider this bill as a remedy to many unnecessary accidental deaths among children in this province.

HOMESTEAD ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR LE PATRIMOINE FAMILIAL

Mr. Hudak moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 75, An Act to amend the Assessment Act with respect to homesteads / Projet de loi 75, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'évaluation foncière à l'égard des patrimoines familiaux.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): If this bill, short title the Homestead Act, is passed, here are some of the powers that the bill would bring forward to protect taxpayers: first, a cap on residential property assessment increases for tax purposes at 5% per year, as long as home ownership is maintained; second, the ability of Ontario homeowners to make up to \$25,000 in home repairs, alterations, improvements or additions without facing an increase in their property assessment; third, seniors and the disabled would not pay property tax on the first \$10,000 of the assessed value of their principal residence.

In the gallery, and I want to thank them for their advice and support of the bill, are Barbara Butters, a councillor from city of Port Colborne; Barry Rand, a councillor from the township of North Kawartha; Andy Sharpe, a councillor from Havelock-Belmont-Methuen; Terry Rees from the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations; and Bob Topp from WRAFT, as well as residents of the Sherkston area of Port Colborne.

MOTIONS

PARTY STATUS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to introduce a motion regarding the status of the New Democratic Party in the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 2, the New Democratic Party caucus be afforded the status of recognized party in respect of all procedural and administrative matters, pending the outcome of the next provincial election in 2007, at which time the terms of the standing order shall apply.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move that pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Wednesday, March 1, 2006, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1358 to 1403.

The Speaker: Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion number 70. All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Balkissoon, Bas	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Bartolucci, Rick	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Kular, Kuldip	Racco, Mario G.
Bradley, James J.	Kwinter, Monte	Ramal, Khalil
Brownell, Jim	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Rinaldi, Lou
Bryant, Michael	Levac, Dave	Ruprecht, Tony
Cansfield, Donna H.	Marsales, Judy	Sandals, Liz
Caplan, David	Matthews, Deborah	Smith, Monique
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Mauro, Bill	Smitherman, George
Colle, Mike	McMeekin, Ted	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Crozier, Bruce	Meilleur, Madeleine	Van Bommel, Maria
Delaney, Bob	Mitchell, Carol	Watson, Jim
Di Cocco, Caroline	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wilkinson, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Parsons, Ernie	Wong, Tony C.
Duguid, Brad	Patten, Richard	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duncan, Dwight	Peters, Steve	Zimmer, David
Fonseca, Peter	Peterson, Tim	
Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry	

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Amott, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Klees, Frank	Runciman, Robert W.
Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Scott, Laurie
Chudleigh, Ted	Marchese, Rosario	Sterling, Norman W.
Dunlop, Garfield	Martel, Shelley	Tascona, Joseph N.
Hardeman, Ernie	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tory, John
Horwath, Andrea	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Hudak, Tim	O'Toole, John	Yakabuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 52; the nays are 24.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): I'd like to inform members of the House that today marks the launch of Fraud Awareness Month across the country. Fraud Awareness Month is a Canada-wide campaign designed to remind consumers of the need to shop carefully and be alert to sales pitches that sound too good to be true.

Ontario is joining with more than 70 partners from across the country, including other governments, law enforcement agencies, consumer groups and private sector companies in this campaign. Our partners include such distinguished organizations as the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Bankers Association, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, the Ontario Association of Crime Stoppers, the Canadian Council of Better Business Bureaus, Canadian Security Administrators, eBay Canada, Bell Canada and Tim Hortons, just to name a few.

The campaign's objectives are to educate consumers about fraud, encourage the reporting of fraud and make Canada a hostile environment to the perpetrators of fraud. Although we are focusing on fraud awareness this month, of course consumers should be alert all year.

This government has recently taken a number of steps to better protect consumers, expose fraudulent activities and punish those who try to take advantage of consumers. Remember that we passed a tough new Consumer Protection Act featuring the most sweeping and comprehensive changes to Ontario's consumer laws in more than 30 years. We have strengthened enforcement resources at the ministry's consumer services branch, including hiring three new investigators. We've launched a discussion paper with stakeholders to identify legislative reforms that will combat identity theft and educate consumers of the growing problem.

We have also created the Consumer Beware list. That's an on-line database that lists businesses with unresolved complaints and convictions. We've distributed more than 220,000 Fraud Free calendars, with the help of many of the members of the Legislature, featuring tips and advice for consumers to avoid frauds and scams. We have published seven consumer brochures on a variety of consumer topics—and I might say they're available in eight languages—and created an on-line fraud quiz available on the ministry's website to help consumers avoid being defrauded.

The province's new Consumer Protection Act has made Ontario a national leader in consumer protection. Under the new act, the fine for individuals has doubled to \$50,000 and fines for corporations have more than doubled to \$250,000. Jail terms were increased to two years less a day. The new act also includes a host of greater disclosure and cancellation rights for consumers.

Last year alone, more than 75,000 people contacted the Ontario government's consumer services bureau regarding consumer issues. Many of these contacts led to the successful resolution of disputes between consumers and businesses; others, though, led to charges and convictions. Altogether, the ministry laid 986 charges against businesses and individuals. Charges prosecuted in 2005 resulted in a total of 45 months in jail terms, 675 months of probation, \$600,000 in fines and more than \$300,000 in restitution orders.

1410

Members are aware that identity theft is one of the fastest-growing crimes in Canada. My colleague from Davenport has raised this issue. My ministry is working with its partners in other jurisdictions across the country to identify legislative reforms to combat identity theft and to make it easier for victims to recover from such an experience. The consultation has received helpful feedback from the public and from stakeholders on that paper. I look forward to receiving the final recommendations on how we will prevent these crimes.

The ministry is also involved with its partners in educating consumers and businesses about things we can do to prevent identity theft, such as encouraging consumers to carry only the cards and ID they need, encouraging businesses to collect only essential data, and keeping personal information in a secure location.

The vast majority of business owners in this province are honest. It is the small handful of dishonest ones that we want to put out of business. The best way to do that is for consumers to educate themselves and to report fraudulent activities.

This government is fighting fraud every day through education and enforcement. All our partners will be engaged in action to spread this anti-fraud message. A key proponent of this campaign is PhoneBusters and its "Recognize it. Report it. Stop it." program. We will see posters, media and online reminders to be alert to scams and to report any such activities.

For those in the public and the Legislature who don't know, PhoneBusters is a national anti-fraud call centre jointly operated by the Ontario Provincial Police and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. I might say it was the Ontario Provincial Police that, several years ago, originated this idea, and I'm very proud of that on behalf of Ontario.

PhoneBusters plays a key role in educating the public about telemarketing scams and other fraudulent activities such as identity theft. We are proud to participate with PhoneBusters and our other partners in this important consumer awareness initiative.

Consumers who have been victimized, know of dishonest activities or just have a question to ask can contact the consumer services bureau at 416-326-8800 in Toronto, or toll free at 1-800-889-9768. Consumers also, of course, can use our online form on the MGS—Ministry of Government Services—website to inform the government about consumer complaints. That address is www.mgs.gov.on.ca.

I am proud of this government's work in providing the people of Ontario with consumer protection fit for the 20th century.

MINING INDUSTRY

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): Last November, I was very pleased to rise in this House to inform members that Ontario's mineral sector was enjoying a boom the likes of which we had not seen since the 1980s, and that our status as a world leader in mineral exploration and development was secure. Mining is indeed still a tremendous success story in Ontario.

Starting tomorrow, our government will lead a dialogue on issues common to the global mining industry and will continue to promote the province as a preferred destination for mining and mineral investment when we join the World Bank in hosting the 2006 World Mines Ministries Forum here in Toronto. Ministers and staff representing mining jurisdictions from around the world will meet to discuss such issues as geological survey activities, environmental sustainability and relationship-building with indigenous peoples.

The World Mines Ministries Forum is immediately followed by the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada annual convention, which also takes place at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. The PDAC, as it is known, expects to welcome approximately 13,000 delegates from 90 different countries. Widely considered to be the most important event in the world of mining, there is simply no better place to be than the PDAC to promote our great province as a progressive, preferred destination for investment in mineral development and to highlight the potential of northern mining communities and institutions.

The Ontario pavilion will host the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, along with our partners including northern municipalities, mining-related colleges and universities, far north First Nations communities, the GO North investor program and the Ontario Mineral Industry Cluster Council. Together with our partners, we will be able to tell the world—in fact, show the world—that Ontario is hands-down the most exciting and inviting jurisdiction in the world.

The numbers say it all. For the first time ever, active mining claims in Ontario have exceeded 200,000 units. For the third consecutive year, exploration expenditures are expected to rise and are projected to reach \$300 million in 2006. The value of total mineral production rose to more than \$7.2 billion in 2005, a 27% increase from the year 2003. We are a top-10 world-ranked producer of nickel, platinum group metals, gold and cobalt, and among the top 20 world producers of copper, zinc and silver. And we are on the verge of witnessing the development of Ontario's first diamond mine on the coast of James Bay, with the De Beers Victor Project, in partnership with Attawapiskat First Nations.

This current boom has only reaffirmed our government's belief that the mining sector is critical to building

a strong and prosperous economy so that all communities, including First Nations communities, can begin to see a quality of life that is second to none.

These are indeed promising times in the world of mineral development. The McGuinty government remains wholly committed to continuing its leadership role in promoting sustainable mineral development and to building on our industry status as a world leader in mineral exploration and development. In fact, the concept of sustainable development is a central theme of our province's first-ever mineral development strategy. I look forward to officially unveiling the strategy in the very near future.

I know all members join me in welcoming the global mining community to Toronto.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Responses?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): John Tory and the official opposition would like to welcome as well the world's mining dignitaries to the third annual world mining forum. It's like they say: If it's not grown, it has to be mined. The world forum, as mentioned, first came to be in 1999, holding its first biennial forum in 2000. This forum brings together mining experts from around the world to discuss all aspects of mining, from financial to political impacts.

Mining is one of Ontario's lifebloods, and particularly a lifeblood of northern Ontario. I suspect that all members are being approached, particularly in southern Ontario, regarding concerns about the environmental impacts of mining. I'm glad to say that the Ontario Mining Association is informing people through its teacher's guide, explaining mining impacts and the good work that the industry is doing. Simply click on the website of the Ontario Mining Association to experience the good work the industry is doing. I would hope that the current government aids in informing so many students about misconceptions that they have regarding the mining industry.

As well, we welcome the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada and its thousands of participants. Personally, previously having owned a prospector licence, I've had a little experience from being in the field, so to speak. As a matter of fact, I had the privilege this summer to show a number of students a calcite deposit which contained several apatite crystals throughout it.

I would hope the minister is able to assist the industry in providing a skills development program, as the industry is seeking skilled individuals to be able to further work in the mining industry.

Lastly, I invite all members to attend the Meet the Miners Day here at Queen's Park on May 2.

1420

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): Thousands of Ontarians fall victim to fraud every year. To prevent this, consumers need to become more

educated on the types of scams that exist as well as how to avoid becoming another victim.

But what is fraud, I ask. Fraud is defined in the Black's Law Dictionary as a knowing misrepresentation of the truth, or a concealment of a material fact to induce another to act to his or her detriment. An example: telling voters during an election campaign that you won't increase taxes, but after being elected, the McGuinty government brings in a health tax, the largest tax grab in the history of this province. But I digress.

Let's not talk solely about voter fraud, but talk about—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Stop the clock. Order. The Minister of Health Promotion will come to order. We can wait.

The member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford.

Mr. Tascona: There are three major types of consumer fraud: first, Internet fraud, which involves investment scams, fake business opportunities and fraudulent auctions; second, identity theft, the fastest-growing crime in North America; third, telemarketing fraud, which involves credit card schemes, foreign lotteries and bogus bonds. Now we have the onslaught of virtual gaming. The McGuinty Liberal government has proved inadequate to deal with online gambling, which is undermining our provincial gaming industry and also defrauding consumers.

The McGuinty Liberal government has no plan to stop fraud against Ontarians, whether perpetrated in Ontario or outside of Ontario. Fraud is going up, it's not going down. It's nice to have an announcement today that we're recognizing fraud across this country when it's going up and we have a major problem. So I conclude, and I commend the minister for wrestling this fraud problem up to the ceiling.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I say to the Minister of Government Services that it's surely some huge amount of chutzpah that permits him to stand up and talk about this government's acknowledgment of Fraud Awareness Month when we don't even have a consumer protection ministry anymore. There isn't one. It has been disbanded; it has been sent home. The furniture has been sold off in a lawn sale. For this minister then to talk about the anti-fraud effort consisting of 220,000 free fraud calendars is in itself a remarkable statement.

I tell you, the scam artists, the Ponzi scheme operators are shaking in their boots. They're leaving town, make no mistake about it. They're lined up at Pearson airport, saying, "There's no room for us in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario. By God, they put out almost a quarter of a million calendars. There ain't room." There ain't room for the fraudulent roofers anymore. There ain't room for the fraudulent basement sealers anymore. There ain't room for the fraud artists who travel from town to town and lay down shabby asphalt, because, by God, this Minister of Government Services is going to take them down with a calendar, and if one calendar won't take them down, it'll be a box of calendars.

I want to tell you, my colleague in the Conservative Party strikes a nerve when he talks about the real fraud that should be addressed. Police forces are still so understaffed in this province that the anti-fraud departments of police forces are barely able to investigate serious crimes, the most senior ones, the big-money ones, never mind the plethora of bad cheques and that type of fraud which land on their desks. There simply aren't the resources to address those.

I say to you, Minister, that the protection for senior citizens who are facing ever-escalating property taxes isn't forthcoming, the protection for folks across this province—homeowners, apartment dwellers, small business people, big business and its employees—who are being gouged and hammered with ever-escalating electricity prices that have destroyed tens of thousands of jobs over the last 13 months, are not being protected.

Nobody is being protected from cabinet ministers who simply won't answer questions in question period. Nobody is protecting students in this province from tuition rates that are skyrocketing through the roof, preventing more and more students from not just low-income but middle-income families from even daring to think of attending college or university.

Nobody is protecting people from the list of broken Liberal promises. Nobody is protecting voters who voted for Liberals because they wanted change and end up getting spare change. Nobody is protecting consumers of health care in this province from the privatization agenda that you are pursuing with Bill 36. Nobody is protecting seniors or their children or their grandchildren from your P3 hospitals that are taking scarce health dollars and turning them into profits for some of the wealthiest international corporations. Nobody is protecting nurses and other health workers from you and your anti-public-health-care agenda.

Nobody is protecting those tens of thousands of workers who have lost good jobs in this province—good jobs that permit them to pay taxes and to buy the things their neighbour builds and send their kids to school. Nobody is protecting them from your anti-job agenda, from your destruction of over 60,000 good jobs, value-added manufacturing jobs, in the course of the last 13 months.

I tell you, there is a lot of room for some anti-rackets investigations and prosecutions here in Ontario. It's not going to come from your non-ministry, because there is no ministry of consumer protection, and the people of this province know full well that they're not going to be protected by Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals, who will promise the world and then deliver zip, nothing, nada.

VISITORS

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to acknowledge the representatives from the Canadian Automobile Association who have joined us today in the gallery, including a former member and cabinet minister,

Mr. Bob Wong, who now represents the Canadian Automobile Association as the chair of the south central Ontario club.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to take a moment to introduce all of the students who are here in the House today from Bishop Strachan from the riding of St. Paul's. It's a great day because we're also going to speak about International Women's Day in a moment. Welcome to the House.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent for all parties to speak for up to five minutes to recognize International Women's Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The House leader is asking for unanimous consent for all parties to speak for up to five minutes to recognize International Women's Day. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I rise in the Legislature today to recognize that this coming March 8 is International Women's Day. March 8 is an opportunity to recognize and celebrate the gains that we have made in gender equality, and I think the Olympic Games in Torino was another great opportunity for the women of Canada to show us those great gains we had with the number of medals they brought back for our country.

The year 2006 marks the 25th anniversary of Canada's ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The convention is often described as an international bill of rights for women. At last count, 180 countries, over 90% of the members of the United Nations, have signed on. Article 3 of the convention states that these nations, "shall take ... all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men."

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I'm proud that my country and my province are committed to guaranteeing full equality for women. I'm proud that our government has a vision where everyone participates fully in all aspects of the province's economic, social and cultural life. I'm determined to make this a reality. Our government understands it's only when members of our society, all of us, can participate fully in all aspects of life that we in this province can call ourselves a democratic and just society.

We understand that women must have equal access to education, that through education they follow a path of full participation in the economy, and that we must

protect and support women at risk of becoming victims of harassment and violence. We understand that the real change will come when young girls grow up believing they have every opportunity available to their brothers, and I know that the young ladies here from Bishop Strachan today believe that as well. They can be captain of the hockey team and be part of the women's Olympic team that leads the country to a record medal count. If they choose, they can be the dean of a university, the CEO of a corporation or the chief of police.

While we remind ourselves that we still have a long way to go, let's move forward by reinforcing our positive vision and celebrating our achievements. I'm pleased to announce that on International Women's Day, I'll be announcing details of the first Ontario government award to honour women who demonstrate exceptional community leadership on behalf of women and girls. This award will give us the opportunity to recognize women across Ontario who help build strong and safe communities. In order to make sure that we reach each and every community where women are making a difference, I'll be asking all members of this House and all members of Parliament to nominate women from their constituencies.

It will be especially appropriate to launch this award on March 8, International Women's Day, because it will give us the opportunity to express that vision, the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms so well articulated in the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. It will give us the opportunity to affirm for all women in Ontario that the life they want is possible and achievable. This award will allow us to reinforce our positive message, not just on International Women's Day but throughout the year.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I'm certainly very pleased to stand today on behalf of our caucus and recognize International Women's Day on March 8, a day that was established in 1977 by the United Nations. Certainly we welcome the students from Bishop Strachan, who are here. It is most fitting that they would be here for this special day as we celebrate it.

This is a special day that does provide an opportunity for all of us to reflect on the progress that has been made to advance women's equality. It also allows us the opportunity to assess the challenges that continue to face women in contemporary society, and to consider the future steps we can all take together in order to bring about full equality for women in all their diversity. But most important, I think it is an opportunity for us to take a look at the gains we have made and the gains we need to celebrate. The Canadian theme for this year's International Women's Week is Beyond Laws: The Right to be Me. Last week during the Olympic games in Torino, we certainly saw the opportunity for women athletes, particularly those from Canada: "the right to be me." I think we all applauded their achievements, particularly the women who won the hockey gold. I say that because some years ago when I was a teenager, a few friends and I attempted to create and set up a hockey team for girls in

the small town of Exeter. Although we didn't get very far, it's rather gratifying to see how far women have come and then to see our own females take the gold. That was a gratifying day, and it just shows you that women do have "the right to be me."

This is a time when we need to recognize that 2006 marks the 25th anniversary of Canada's ratification of the most comprehensive international treaty on women's rights, the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. I have been watching on TV some of the discrimination that is faced by women in Pakistan, and you realize that in countries throughout the world, women have not made some of the gains that we have here in Canada and North America.

We have accomplished much in the way of putting in place legal foundations, such as the Canadian Human Rights Act, pay and employment equity laws, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and, of course, maternity and parental benefits.

If we take a look at some of the other reasons for celebration, we know that in post-secondary education the barriers women faced at one time have all but been eliminated. In 2001, women comprised 59% of undergraduate student enrolment and 50% of graduate student enrolment.

If we take a look at some of the fields that were traditionally male-dominated, we see that these fields have opened up to women. Women are pursuing careers in growing numbers in the fields of medicine, law, dentistry, business and engineering, so there is growing opportunity for women to pursue these careers.

In business, it is expected that as we look ahead to the century we're in, at least half of the new companies are going to be started by women. The Institute for Small Business noted that between 1991 and 1994, Canadian firms run by women created new jobs at four times the rate of the national average. Women are creating not just jobs but entire companies at double the rate of the national average. So this is all very important.

One of the areas where women need to continue to make some gains is in the corporate field and in the boardrooms of Canadian corporations. We are definitely still lagging. Of course, if we take a look at our own Legislature, we do not hold much more than one fifth of the elected offices in Canada. In Europe at the present time, it's about a third. Today, for the first time, none of the Canadian political parties is headed by a woman, none of Canada's Premiers is a women, and none of the mayors of our largest cities. In the recent election—

Interjections: Hazel.

Mrs. Witmer: It's not one of the cities.

It is evident that we need to do what we can to continue to be better represented in all levels of decision-making.

Certainly, I will acknowledge Hazel McCallion as being an outstanding leader and role model, not just for Ontarians but I think for all Canadians. I doubt if there's anybody anywhere.

I think the challenge that remains for us, particularly in this House, is that we need to accelerate the progress towards the inclusion of women into formal decision-making bodies, but we also need to increase their impact on decision-making.

Today, we have every reason to be proud. Our Olympic athletes have given us all reason for pride. I have no doubt that as we continue to work together, all three political parties, we can increase the opportunities for equality for all women.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): It's my pleasure to rise on behalf of New Democrats to talk about International Women's Day, which is a day that we all know is a time to reflect on the progress made by women to advance the equality of women in our society. It's a time to assess the challenges facing women today, to set out a course of action to enhance the status of women and, of course, to celebrate women and the gains we've made. Finally, we celebrate the daily struggles that regular women are engaged in to push for change in every aspect of life in Ontario.

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Recently, I had the pleasure of participating in a play about the Hamilton chapter of the Canadian Club at the Scottish Rite in Hamilton, where I played the role of a woman named Sara Calder, who was an inspirational woman of the late 1800s and early 20th century. She distinguished herself with her leadership in a place called the Wentworth Historical Society. She broke away from the men in that group to establish her own autonomous ladies' society. Long before women were routinely taking charge of decision-making, Ms. Calder was running her own show, raising funds that went to purchase and preserve what are now some of Ontario's most valued heritage sites in the community of Stoney Creek. She was one of those women of her time who was pushing the envelope.

It's ironic that here in the 21st century women are still focusing on winning full rights to participate in society on an equal footing with men. After more than 100 years, barriers continue to impede women's progress. For example, women still earn less in wages than men for similar work. They still take on a greater share of part-time work, contract and temporary employment, and receive less job security, including less adequate pensions. They remain primary caregivers for families, including now aging parents.

The Canadian theme for International Women's Week in 2006 addresses women's rights, women's diversity, and above all, the need to put words into action in the slogan *Beyond Laws: The Right to Be Me*. Of course, we saw the reflection of that in the success of our women's hockey team with the Olympic gold medal.

Have we, as a society, done enough to ensure that income security is there for women? Not yet. Have we seen enough women in politics? Not yet. We need only to look around this chamber: The diversity of our population isn't reflected here in this House. Have we made it possible for every woman or child confronting violence

in the home to leave the abuse and have a safe, supportive place to go to? Not yet.

This really tells us, as legislators, where the emphasis needs to be. There is much more that all governments should be doing and could be doing on women's issues.

Do we have a law in Ontario that would protect women from violence and harassment in the workplace, harassment that was cited as a factor in the murder of Lori Dupont at her Windsor hospital workplace? Not yet.

As the NDP women's issues critic, I feel, as all of this House must be feeling, that we have to get beyond the time of "not yet." We have to get to a place where there are no more "not yet's."

For example, we have to stop Ontario's clawback of the national child benefit from families receiving social assistance. Women in the greatest financial need are not seeing the benefit that was supposed to help them fight poverty.

A lack of housing and money is one of the prime factors that drives women and children back to the abuser; we all know this. Without money and a place to live, many women remain in violent relationships so their children will be housed and fed. That means governments need to get serious about directing promised funds back into creating affordable housing and second-stage housing, whose base funding has been all but flatlined since 1994.

Let's get serious about implementing the package of emergency measures recommended by the experts that we know, without a doubt, will save women's lives. These measures include second-stage housing; stronger laws around bail, restraining orders, no-contact orders and peace bonds; risk assessment tools implemented in every court before every bail hearing where violence against women has occurred; passage of the bill that would protect women from all forms of violence and harassment by changing the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

Furthermore, women need to see promised provincial and federal investments going into child care. Real Ontario dollars need to be invested in Ontario's child care program.

There are many more issues that are on my list here, things that are practical and implementable today, that can affect the way women see the world, and the way women are able to access justice in our communities.

I want to close with a quote, one that comes from Geraldine Ferraro. What she said was this, and I hope this quote is going to inspire all women, not only today but as we move into the week of International Women's Day: It says, "We've chosen the path to equality, don't let them turn us around."

ORAL QUESTIONS

MINISTERIAL CONDUCT

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. Premier, why do you feel it is

appropriate for you to suddenly shut down debate on the unprecedented motion surrounding the Integrity Commissioner's report on Minister Takhar, a report that was so critical of his behaviour?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'm always pleased to take a question, but I'm sure the leader of the official opposition would understand why I would not agree with his characterization of bringing this debate to a conclusion. I think he would also know that the act governing this particular debate requires that our assembly consider and respond to a report filed by the Integrity Commissioner within 30 days of it being tabled in this House. It was tabled on February 13; therefore, we must respond by March 13. The House rises tomorrow. So we've had good opportunity to discuss this issue in a debate of some length, and we look forward to bringing it to a conclusion.

Mr. Tory: Even consulting the people at the Clerk's table, it's not clear—and it's not part of the rules, of course; it's part of the statute—what “consider and respond” means in terms of how long or what a response is. The bottom line is that, regardless of that interpretation, which could only come from the courts, this is the first time in the history of this province that a minister has been officially reprimanded by the Integrity Commissioner. When you talk about the fulsome debate that has unfolded, the fact is that Justice Osborne spent seven months investigating this matter and writing his report, and we've had exactly three days of debate in this Legislature since that time. We find that the minister's story continues to change; new things come to bear on this in terms of interpretations and inconsistencies with his report.

We have put an amendment that would have this go off to committee so it could be further discussed. I think that would be well within the ambit of the section on considering and responding within the 30 days. Would you consider that and allow the debate to continue, rather than choking it off?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: No, that is not something I am prepared to consider. I think the people of Ontario are entitled to have this explored and debated in a fulsome manner, and that is, in fact, what we are doing in this House.

Twenty-four MPPs have spoken to this issue so far during the course of this debate. The leader of the official opposition himself has raised this matter on countless occasions, both during question period and in other opportunities in this House, and outside the House. I think it is important for us to have that full opportunity, which we have. I believe today will be the fourth day of debate, and we look forward to bringing this matter to a conclusion.

Mr. Tory: The fact is, today we're debating a time allocation motion so you can choke off the debate. You've only called it three times. If you were really interested in having a fulsome debate—I don't know whether you're suggesting that 24 out of 103 members is

even close to the number. I can tell you, in our case we've had seven members speak to the original motion and four members speak to an amendment that we moved, and there are many more who want to speak on this and be heard.

So I repeat my question to you: If you were really interested in an open debate on this, a full debate so we can all have our chance to have our say on this, as opposed to trying to choke it off because you find it's an embarrassing matter for your government, why wouldn't you find a way to either extend the debate in this Legislature when we come back, rather than time-allocating, or go along with an amendment? We'd be happy to discuss wording with you of an amendment to the motion that could send it to committee for a period of time for some additional debate. Why are you trying to cut this debate off?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I appreciate the leader of the official opposition's position on this, but it is not one with which I can agree.

Maybe we should take a moment to properly consider what it is that we are debating. The motion that is put forward is pretty straightforward. It reads, “That the Legislative Assembly adopt the report of the Integrity Commissioner dated January 4, 2006, and approve the recommendation contained therein.”

I'm not aware of any member in this House who's going to be voting against this. I think there is unanimity with respect to the outcome of this particular motion. So we look forward to getting on with this, to bringing this to a conclusion, and we do so with the confidence that we have given this a real opportunity for fulsome debate in this House.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): New question.

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, on April 26, your executive assistant wrote to the Integrity Commissioner about a potential conflict that you had regarding new specifications for truck axles and suspensions for trucks operating on Ontario highways. You declared a conflict of interest then and refrained from participating. Today, we now know that you were personally involved in discussions, and your staff were involved in consultations, again on a similar issue, involving discussions around specifications for truck and trailer axles and suspensions operating on Ontario highways. Why did you not contact the Integrity Commissioner about this second issue that we've now learned about?

1450

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): Let me say this: This issue came from the industry. The Ontario Trucking Association, Procter and Gamble, The Bay, Frito-Lay and other companies approached me. They wanted to have a long-combination-vehicles proposal put forward to the ministry for consideration.

Let me just say what long combination vehicles are. Normally, a truck pulls one trailer, but in this case, they

wanted to have two trailers pulled by the truck, because the freight they carry is bulky and they carry less freight in a trailer. So they wanted to reduce their freight costs and asked us to consider that proposal. So I asked the ministry to look into it.

But before we even did that, the Premier had put a protocol in place, and we asked the ministry if there was even a perceived conflict of interest in this case. The ministry told me there was absolutely none. I, myself, as the minister, ordered to consider the proposal from the—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Wilson: Minister, we have the specification sheet from your ministry about this issue, and it clearly speaks about axle requirements and “other equipment, as required by the Highway Traffic Act.” It talks about axle loads, just like in the first instance. It involves trucks on Ontario roads, just like in the first instance.

Your own Premier said in his letter concerning the first issue that you had informed him about a potential conflict “in relation to axle requirements for vehicles.” The Premier also said, “I wish to avoid all conflicts—real or perceived.” The Premier asked your parliamentary assistant to take the file and asked that you and your staff refrain from discussion.

Minister, why did you think it was a conflict then but not now? Why was the Integrity Commissioner contacted last time but not this time?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: Let me be clear again: This proposal is about adding another trailer. It talks about the total length of the tractor and the trailers. It doesn't deal with the weight dimensions. The total weight of the truck, the total weight it will carry and the axle weight requirements do not change. There was no change even in the proposal that was put forward by the industry for consideration. All I asked the ministry was to look at what the other provinces were doing, what the industry was asking for and if it ever made any sense for us to do it.

Mr. Wilson: According to Livio Luchini, the manager of sales administration at Chalmers, “Chalmers Suspensions manufactures suspensions for all the major original equipment manufacturers, including Kenworth, Peterbilt, Freightliner, Mack, Volvo, and specialty truck chassis builders.” It says their products are “well-received on trucks of all construction and vocational applications—including refuse-collection vehicles.”

Minister, the Integrity Commissioner was very clear in his guidance to you the first time. In his letter back to your executive assistant, he said, “I would suggest that the minister act prudently and not expose himself to the risk of being perceived as having a conflict of interest.”

Minister, it was about axle requirements then; it's about axle requirements now. It was vehicles on Ontario roads then; it's the same now. You followed the commissioner's advice then, but you did not even seek his advice this time. What has changed? Why did you not contact the Integrity Commissioner about this second issue when so many things were exactly the same?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: Actually, the member has answered the question himself. He read the statement

from the sales manager of the company, and it said “construction” trucks and “vocational” trucks. These are not vocational trucks, these are not construction trucks and these are not logging trucks. He already answered that question.

Let me state it again: The company that I was involved in made heavy-duty suspensions. These are the lift suspensions used on these trucks and trailers. It doesn't change the weight of the trucks. It doesn't change the axle requirements. So there was absolutely no conflict at any time.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): Premier, the problems with your \$40-billion nuclear power boondoggle and the Ontario Power Authority's electricity supply mix report become more obvious every day. Yesterday, the Sierra Club pointed out that you have completely omitted conservation and energy efficiency targets in the report. Today, Greenpeace, the Pembina Institute and the David Suzuki Foundation released a legal opinion that concludes that a full environmental assessment of your electricity supply mix plan is mandatory under the Ontario Environmental Assessment Act.

Premier, does your government, the McGuinty government, have any legal opinion suggesting that an environmental assessment is not required for the Ontario Power Authority electricity supply mix report? And if you have it, will you table it today?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'm pleased to take the question. The leader of the NDP raises some important issues. I think one of the things I want to convey to him today, and our public as well, is that the Ontario Power Authority has put forward a proposed plan. What we have done is made that public, and we've created opportunities for Ontarians, experts and non-experts alike, all those who are concerned about ensuring that we are meeting our energy supplies in the future, to comment. On the basis of that comment, we will then send instructions to the Ontario Power Authority with respect to how to proceed on this. So we continue to acquire information, to collect the very best advice that we can, and the leader of the NDP should understand that what the Ontario Power Authority put out was a proposal—nothing more than that. We intend to improve upon that.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, the Suzuki Foundation, Greenpeace and the Pembina Institute are telling you that your attempt to mask your \$40-billion nuclear mega-boondoggle with sham consultations does not replace the legal requirement for a full environmental assessment of the electricity supply mix plan. The David Suzuki Foundation says that under the laws of the province of Ontario, your government is mandated to undertake a full environmental assessment of that electricity supply mix plan.

My question, Premier, is, when can the people of Ontario expect the McGuinty government to obey the law of Ontario and order a joint Ontario Energy Board

and Environmental Review Tribunal environmental assessment of your integrated electricity supply mix plan?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: We are always most appreciative of advice offered on any matter of public policy, but of course especially in this context, in the matter of our plans to meet our energy needs in the future. I have a particular appreciation for the David Suzuki Foundation. In fact, just a couple of weeks ago, I met again with Dr. Suzuki in my offices here at Queen's Park to get still more advice from him.

We intend to ensure that whatever proposal we put forward does in fact become the subject of a full environmental assessment, and that will once again allow interested Ontarians to provide yet more advice and more input into making sure that we get this right for the future.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, here's the reality: Your integrated electricity supply mix plan is one of the largest and most costly decisions in Ontario's history: \$80 billion in total costs and at least \$40 billion for your pet nuclear megaprojects. Yet you refuse to require the Ontario Power Authority to set energy efficiency and energy conservation targets, and now environmental organizations like the David Suzuki Foundation will have to take the McGuinty government to court to get what common sense dictates should happen in the first place: a full and open environmental assessment of your integrated electricity supply mix plan.

Premier, when will you listen to the people of Ontario, when will you listen to the David Suzuki Foundation, Greenpeace and the Pembina Institute and open your backroom nuclear megadeals to the clear light of a joint board environmental assessment? When will you obey the laws of Ontario?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The leader of the NDP, in his characterization of our energy plan, is nothing if not colourful, and I appreciate the approach that he brings in this regard, but we are charged with a very special responsibility. And while there will be no shortage of advice in this regard, there is only one group of Ontarians who are charged with the responsibility to keep the lights on, now and into the foreseeable future. So we will carefully weigh all the advice that we receive and we'll build on a foundation that was built by previous energy ministers over previous governmental regimes.

In that context, I acknowledge Bob Wong, who is here, a former Minister of Energy who brought into place, for example, the Energy Efficiency Act of 1989. We will build on that foundation. We will be open to, and most appreciative of, advice we get from Ontarians, expert and non-expert alike, but we will also do whatever we need to do to keep the lights on in the province of Ontario.

1500

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): Premier, it's not me who takes offence, necessarily, with

your plan; it's Greenpeace, the Sierra Club, the Pembina Institute and the David Suzuki Foundation.

But I want to ask you about your claim that your government is committed to publicly controlled, universally accessible health care. This morning you donned your Captain Medicare cape and railed against the evils of the Ralph Klein government. Premier, instead of railing about what might or might not happen in Alberta, something you have no control over, can you explain why your government, the McGuinty government, is privatizing the Trillium drug plan?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): The Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): We've had a chance over the course of the last few days to remind the honourable member that during the life of the government he was proud to be part of, there was a significant outsourcing of services in hospitals. What's key is that the actions our government is taking with respect to the administration of the Trillium drug plan are motivated by the desire to enhance customer service.

The circumstances are very clear. We're taking advantage of an opportunity on behalf of the people of Ontario to do a better job of responding to their applications with respect to the Trillium drug plan. Let me give you a couple of pieces of information that dramatically motivate us: In 2004 the time it took to process applications for the Ontario drug benefit, less than five days; for the Trillium drug plan, 22.7 days. The call abandonment, the number of people who hung up on the Ontario drug benefit in 2004, 3%; on the Trillium drug plan, 30 to 50%. This is an opportunity to deliver—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: Isn't it interesting that wherever the McGuinty government sees a problem in the health care system their response is, "Let's privatize." Your latest scheme to privatize the Trillium drug plan is just the latest example of the McGuinty government's agenda of stealth privatization. Before the election, the Premier said that privatizing and contracting out of health services resulted in higher costs and less accountability. You promised to protect publicly controlled, universally accessible health care. But now, all the people of Ontario get from your government is lots of empty rhetoric, but more and more privatization of health care by stealth.

I say again, Premier: You can't do much about what may or may not happen in Alberta, but you can stop your own health care privatization scheme in Ontario. Will you abandon your scheme to privatize the Trillium drug plan?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I think it's a very good indication of the challenge we have with the debate in Ontario so long as the leader of the New Democratic Party thinks that the battle for public health care is being fought over who serves in an administrative function related to a program. The real fight for public health care is on the front line, where people are receiving clinical

services. This is where our Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act and our adherence to the Canada Health Act prevail. We're a government that brought in family health teams and community health centres, that moved forward on the repatriation of MRIs for the public sector. We're proud to celebrate the fact that 13,000 more people enjoy employment in health care today because they're delivering important clinical benefits to the patients of the province of Ontario. We will not apologize for taking actions that will allow people, instead of hanging on the other end of the line, to get the service they require, responsiveness from government, and a public health care system that meets the needs of our patients in a timely way.

Mr. Hampton: We have the McGuinty government that thinks if they holler loud enough, they can deny that they're in fact privatizing. In fact—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I need to be able to hear the leader of the third party. Order.

Leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: In fact, as I said earlier, this is just the latest episode. For example, soon after the election, you delisted eye exams, chiropractic care and physiotherapy. That's privatization. You brought in privately, profit-driven, financed hospitals, something you say you used to detest. That's privatization. Now you're ramming through your LHINs legislation, which will see hospital services sold off to cutthroat bidders. That's privatization. Instead of improving service at the Trillium drug program, you're simply going to privatize the Trillium drug plan. That's privatization.

Again, Premier, I say to you, before you get on your high horse and rail against what might or might not happen in Alberta, something you have no control over, will you stop your own privatization of the health care scheme in Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: There goes the honourable member from the riding who's got amnesia about his role. He wants to pretend that the Trillium Health Centre and other hospitals in the province didn't see the outsourcing of services that occurred on his watch.

This is the big challenge with the honourable member. He can't make the distinction between those services that are clinical and those that are clerical. This isn't about doctors. It's not about nurses or radiation technologists. It's not about the recipients of front-line health care services. It is about taking advantage of an opportunity to dramatically enhance our customer service capacity by giving people a much more timely response to their requests for assistance from the Trillium drug plan, a plan that we're proud of. Unlike that government that cut health care spending on drugs by \$29 million in one year, we've increased it by \$660 million. There's evidence of our commitment to a public health care system.

MINISTERIAL CONDUCT

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): To the Minister of Transportation: Minister, yesterday your

story evolved once again with your interesting explanation behind your cellphone usage and when you used what phone. We've heard it was your phone you used. We've heard it was your wife's phone you used. Now we hear—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. I need to be able to hear the questions being placed.

The member for Haliburton–Victoria–Brock.

Ms. Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll try again.

The cellphone usage: We've heard it was your phone you used; we've heard it was your wife's phone you used. Now we hear that you all shared cellphones and, I guess, cellphone numbers. Minister, your story changes with every day that passes. The story you gave the Integrity Commissioner no longer lines up with what you have told the media or us here in the chamber. Why are you not being straight with Ontarians? Why will you not simply tell the truth about your behaviour that day and all the other times you visited your company?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): Actually, I have been very straight and upfront with Ontarians. It's the interpretation by the member that keeps changing. From my point of view, this issue has been dealt with by the Integrity Commissioner, and I accept his recommendations.

Ms. Scott: When hearing your statements to the Integrity Commissioner and the press several months ago, you said that you have never gone to Chalmers before and that you had no involvement in the company. However, yesterday you told the media that you would go there or went there when your wife needed help. You also boast about your involvement in Chalmers in your campaign literature, magazine articles and on your website. Your good friend in front of you, Minister Pupa-tello, has referred to Chalmers as "the second home that he built from scratch."

Again, Minister, why are you not being straight with Ontarians? Why are you continuing to change your story by the minute? What are you hiding?

1510

Hon. Mr. Takhar: I think the member doesn't want to listen, doesn't want to read. But let me say this: I used to have the majority share in this company. I used to be the president and the CEO of this company. I dropped my wife off every day in the morning, I picked her up every day in the evening, so I went twice to that company before I got elected to this office. I have said this to the Integrity Commissioner; I have said this to everybody, if you care to listen. This issue has been dealt with, and from my point of view, I accept that report and move on.

LOBBYISTS

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a question to the Premier. Premier, you know one John Duffy. He's a high-ranking Liberal, and he's your former strategic consultant. We last saw him when he was doing the federal talk show circuit, where he was threatening

broadcasters and saying that parents spend child care money on beer and popcorn. But he's got a new gig now: He's a high-priced lobbyist for Atomic Energy of Canada, a company lining up for some of that sweet \$40 billion you want to waste on nuclear power.

First David MacNaughton and Bob Lopinski; now we've got John Duffy. Sir, how do you explain all these Liberal insiders lined up at the nuclear trough?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): Thank you very much for the question. I say to the member: I've never met Mr. Duffy.

Mr. Kormos: The Premier sure as heck has. He and Mr. Duffy are one tight pair. It's like Batman and Robin, if you will.

Premier, if pork-barrelling were an Olympic sport, the Liberal dream team of MacNaughton, Lopinski and Duffy would be in the gold. The Premier should know and does know about the Portlands Energy Centre fiasco, where your energy minister short-circuited a bid process, handed a \$700-million deal to OPG and TransCanada Pipelines. Who's lobbying for TransCanada Pipelines? One J. Bradford Nixon, Ontario Liberal MPP from 1987 to 1990, former executive director to the leader of the Liberal Party, long-time donor to the McGuinty Liberals.

Premier, you promised to put the public interest before political insiders and Liberal cronies. How do you explain this?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I find this a little amusing. I think it's a bit of a double standard, since I understand that there is a member from the third party who actually invited Mr. Lopinski to their fundraiser. So I rest my case.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): New question. The member for Chatham-Kent Essex.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Chatham-Kent Essex is attempting to ask a question.

Mr. Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): Thank you, Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. International Truck and Engine Corp., which has a production plant in my riding of Chatham-Kent Essex, has highly skilled workers making an excellent product. This plant is one of the largest employers in the area and is a vital part of our local economy. The plant was threatened by closure, but government action helped to secure the plant's future in Chatham-Kent.

Minister, can you provide us with an update on International Truck and how our government's investment in strengthening the heavy truck manufacturing industry is progressing?

Hon. Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): Let me thank the member for

this question; it's an important one. I might say that International Truck has invested \$270 million to expand its manufacturing operations in Chatham. This is good news for Ontario. Our government invested \$32 million to ensure that this would take place, that the jobs there would be secure. In fact, hundreds of jobs have been secured—almost 1,200 jobs. Now there's the good news that an additional 500 jobs are to be created as a result of the success of this investment.

Mr. Hoy: Minister, it is good to hear that our investment in International Truck helped leverage this new product. Investments like these show how serious our government is in making Ontario the manufacturing centre of North America. However, Minister, as manufacturers such as International Truck face stiff competition and a high Canadian dollar, what else is our government doing to work with the manufacturing sector as some of them restructure through this period?

Hon. Mr. Cordiano: I'd like to thank the member once again. This is very important, because what we're doing with respect to the manufacturing sector is acknowledging that there is a transition taking place with respect to the restructuring that's going on. As a result of that, we've announced a \$500-million loan program which is centred on advanced manufacturing. Our strategy is to ensure that advanced manufacturing is going to take hold in Ontario; that we make Ontario the advanced manufacturing centre for North America.

You already know about the good news in the auto sector: Almost \$6 billion of new investment has resulted from our strategy there; \$30 billion in additional infrastructure spending that this government has committed to; a \$6.2-billion investment in post-secondary education, and the list goes on—capping energy rates for large industrials. This government is investing in Ontario's future. I think there is success that's coming around.

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): A question to the Minister of Finance: I want to call your attention to Mr. Dave Diplock, a resident of Sherkston, who has joined us in the assembly today. Mr. Diplock is retired and living on a fixed income. Mr. Diplock's assessment has increased from \$187,000 in the 2003 taxation year to almost \$350,000 in 2005. Minister, that represents an 86% increase. What do you have to say to beleaguered Ontario taxpayers like Dave Diplock, and what are you prepared to do to address skyrocketing property assessments across the province of Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): First of all, I'd like to welcome the individual to the House and acknowledge his presence and his concern. I think it's shared by all of us.

I would like to point out that the legislation in place was, in fact, introduced and voted on by Mr. Hudak's party. I'd like to also suggest that Mr. Hudak is attempt-

ing to convey the notion that they can somehow not deal with the whole question of market value assessment, which is frankly not accurate.

There are a number of challenges. I'm looking forward to the Ombudsman's report. We have a group of our caucus that has been looking at this as well. We acknowledge the concerns of the individual, and there have been concerns from many people. The one thing we're not going to do—seven pieces of legislation in eight years—we are not going to just try and get a quick fix to score some political points at the expense of messing the system up more. We take into account the concerns that the individual raised, as well as many others, and we look forward to a fulsome response and discussion—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Hudak: I think what people like Mr. Diplock can appreciate is one piece of legislation in the three years that you've had. The third year in government, and this issue continues to accelerate: rising property tax assessments across the province of Ontario. This is the third year of your government, and taxpayers want an answer. They're facing higher taxes, they're facing higher energy costs, they're facing higher user fees, and they're facing home heating costs going through the roof, all in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario.

I think the minister very well knows that the Ombudsman had received over 3,500 complaints this year in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario about skyrocketing property assessments. So I say to the minister: What do you say to Mr. Diplock; what do you say to Peter Steele from outside of Parry Sound, Ontario, who sees his assessment go up 350%? You've had three years; surely you can bring forward a bill and help out beleaguered taxpayers—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister.
1520

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The first thing I would say is that this government raised the property tax credit for seniors from \$500 to \$625, an increase of 25%, and you voted against it. You didn't support it. You had a chance, and you voted against it. That's the first thing I would say.

I would also like to acknowledge Mr. Hudak's comments in today's St. Catharines Standard. He acknowledged—and this is from the St. Catharines Standard, so it must be accurate—that the problem “is an unexpected result of the legislation his fellow Conservatives pushed through under then-Premier Mike Harris.” The only point I would differ with him on is that we warned him about this problem not in one piece of legislation, not in two, not in three, four, five or six, but in seven.

This government will fix the problem. We'll do it right, and we won't harm seniors—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Stop the clock. Members are waiting to ask questions. New question.

NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT SUPPLEMENT

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I have a very simple question for the Premier. The federal government has announced that starting July 1, they're going to pay \$1,200 to every family with a child less than seven years of age. Will the McGuinty government today commit that none of the federal money will be clawed back from families receiving support from the Ontario disabilities support program or the Ontario Works program?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): Let me take the opportunity to talk about a very important plan that we have in place to enhance quality child care for the people of Ontario. It's called Best Start. We worked long and hard with the previous federal government to ensure that we had the necessary funding to bring 25,000 new spaces to the people of Ontario. I wish the member opposite would have encouraged Jack Layton, before he had that election put in place, to take the necessary steps to ensure that we had the protection for that particular program. That would have been in the interest of the people of Ontario.

I ask the member opposite if she will join us and make common cause as we urge, encourage and do everything we possibly can to have Prime Minister Harper continue to support a program that 25,000 Ontario families continue to count on.

Ms. Horwath: I certainly didn't hear a commitment from the Premier that they're not going to claw back that money, so I fear we're going to go around this whole circle again: clawing back federal money from the Ontarians who are most in need. Nothing demonstrates the attitude of the McGuinty government more clearly than its broken promise to stop clawing back federal money for the most vulnerable people in the national child benefit.

If you really want to tackle child poverty in this province as you claim, when are you going to have the courage to keep your promise not only on the national child benefit but ensuring that that \$1,200 goes to the children who most need it?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The member really should take a look at the history of our party. We will not be clawing back that money, to be perfectly clear in that regard. That's not the real issue; the issue is whether or not that member and her party and this party here are prepared to make common cause. In particular, I ask Mr. Tory this: Is he prepared to make common cause on behalf of the people of Ontario?

I can tell you this is a very important issue to our families, but particularly to young working women who are doing their best to get out into the world and to earn an income but they can't do so at present because we don't have in place the necessary infrastructure of good, quality daycare for our children.

This is an important issue and I ask both parties opposite if they might not join our party and ensure that Prime

Minister Harper understands that when it comes to this issue, we are together: We want quality daycare for Ontario families.

INJURED WORKERS

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a question for the Minister of Labour. Every day, Ontarians cope with a silent and painful disorder that interferes not only with their ability to work but also with their ability to enjoy life. This disorder has many names—musculo-skeletal disorder, repetitive strain injury and ergonomic-related injury.

Musculoskeletal disorders, MSDs, are injuries that can develop as a result of the cumulative effect of repetitive, stressful and awkward movements on bones, joints, ligaments and other soft tissues. Some 42% of all lost-time injuries recorded by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board are ergonomically related. This is an unacceptable number. The costs associated with this disorder are far too high, in terms of both human suffering and lost productivity.

Minister, what are you doing as Minister of Labour to ensure that Ontario's workers are protected from ergonomic-related injuries and other musculoskeletal disorders?

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): I want to acknowledge the member from Davenport for bringing this issue forward, because we do need to acknowledge the human suffering out there: in 2003 alone, over 40,000 musculoskeletal injuries in this province, an economic cost in 2003 of over \$1 billion. That's significant to the business of this province.

We know this is an injury that is taking a tremendous toll on not only humans but business as well. We need to do everything that we can, together, to move forward in developing a strategy to deal with ergonomic-related injuries in this province, to prevent pain and suffering of our workers, and to deal with those direct costs to employers.

Last year, in recognition of Repetitive Strain Injury Awareness Day, a committee was struck to look at this issue. Both business and labour were part of this committee, and I want to thank my parliamentary assistant for his work with that committee. They have brought forth a number of good recommendations that we can look at as a ministry to deal with short-, medium—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Supplementary.

Mr. Ruprecht: Mr. Minister, it is really gratifying to see that this issue of repetitive strain injury is being taken seriously by our government.

We all know individuals who suffer from the effects of RSI. The numbers are too high. However, we expect you to do more. I understand that the economics subcommittee presented recommendations to you back in September. Are you able to tell us today what recommendations the panel made, and have you taken action in any of these recommendations?

Hon. Mr. Peters: Thanks again, to the member from Davenport. I think we've clearly demonstrated as a government that health and safety is a number one priority for the Ministry of Labour, and I think we should all be extremely proud of that.

Some of the recommendations that came forward from the ergonomics subcommittee included raising awareness about ergonomic-related issues, better tracking of ergonomic-related inspections and increasing ergonomics expertise.

In January of this year, the Ministry of Labour launched the Pains and Strains campaign to raise employer and worker awareness of ergonomic issues in a very simple and straightforward manner. By targeting workplace strains and pains, we're protecting Ontario workers and strengthening the economy of this province.

We'll also be giving our health and safety inspectors—and I think this is extremely important—advanced ergonomics training so that they can raise awareness of ergonomic-related issues. We continue to work with our health and safety partners, and we count on the support of all as we move forward. Reducing injury rates reduces human suffering.

WOODSTOCK GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): My question is to the Premier. Just after the federal election, you made reference to the newly elected government, stating that you believed the new Prime Minister wouldn't work against the province that mostly backed Liberal candidates. In fact, you suggested the new Prime Minister should honour agreements that the former government had agreed to.

Premier, how is it that you feel federal governments should honour contracts approved by the previous government, yet you don't seem to hold yourself to the same standard? The people of Woodstock have been waiting for two and a half years for your government to give final approval for the new Woodstock General Hospital.

Premier, can you assure the people in my riding that you are not punishing them for not voting Liberal and prove it by giving final approval for the Woodstock General Hospital so we can go to tender?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): Speaker, to the Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): It would have been more refreshing if the honourable member repeated the things that he's actually said in his community, which was a recognition that the policies adopted by your party on this file—Mr. Tory has confirmed this as well to the community of Cornwall—were such that you advanced the strategy of rubber cheques, where you ran all around Ontario. What I'm proud of is working alongside that minister, the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, and that our government is making an investment in health care infra-

structure that is greater than the last five governments of this province added together.

On the issue of Woodstock, I will speak to it more directly to the honourable member in his supplementary.
1530

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): I hope there isn't a pattern emerging here whereby ridings held by government members have their hospital development approvals fast-tracked, and communities that are represented by opposition MPPs are at the back of the line.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. We're forgetting that I really need to be able to hear a member ask a question and that the member deserves the respect of the Legislature as he asks that question.

Mr. Arnott: In Waterloo–Wellington, the Groves Memorial Community Hospital has been waiting two years for approval from the Minister of Health so that hospital staff can move forward with planning for its redevelopment, even though some \$15 million has been raised by the local community for the project. My question to the Premier is this: Why is the government he leads taking two years to give approval to allow our hospital to proceed with this needed hospital redevelopment planning?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: If the honourable member speaks to the person to his left, Mr. Garfield Dunlop, he will find out about a hospital project just being completed and about a new MRI. If he speaks to the gentleman in front of him, he'll hear about a new project in Almonte. If he goes one to the left, he'll hear about a project in Richmond Hill. If he goes forward and two to the left, he'll hear of a project in Kitchener. If he goes two to his left, he'll hear about a project in Newmarket. If he goes one back and to his left, he'll hear about progress in Cambridge. If he goes over to the member from Oshawa, he'll hear about the new regional cancer centre that's coming to life. If he goes to talk to the member for Renfrew, he'll hear about the project in Arnprior.

The reality is that under our government, we're moving forward with the most aggressive expansion of health care infrastructure—five governments added together. The honourable member, if he was just a little more refreshing and a little more transparent, would acknowledge to this House and to the people in his community that it was the policy of his party to run around the province of Ontario and create expectations which no one could possibly meet—

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Arnott: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: After that disgraceful answer, I'm going to be asking for a late show.

The Speaker: I want to make this clear: We have had a number of members stand up over the last few days and talk about the standing order that speaks to late shows. If you are going to stand up on a point of order, it is very clear in that standing order that, if you choose to do so, you make that at the completion of oral questions. I'll

repeat that: At the completion of oral questions is the appropriate time to make that announcement.

FIRST NATIONS

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. One year ago, with much fanfare and self-congratulation, your government announced a new approach to aboriginal affairs. You said, "Our new approach calls for working with aboriginal people."

Recently, the chief in council of the Big Trout Lake First Nation informed your government officials that they were opposed to a mining exploration company conducting drilling operations in the First Nation's traditional territory without your government first consulting with the First Nation. Instead of your government consulting with the people of Big Trout Lake First Nation, you gave the mining exploration company the go-ahead to begin drilling in the First Nation's traditional lands, and when the people of the First Nation protested this, you sent in the OPP.

Premier, can you tell aboriginal people across this province, what happened to your promise to work with aboriginal people? What happened to your specific promise to respect and observe your legal obligations in respect of aboriginal people?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): In incidents like this, it is always good to ensure that the facts that are given are facts that can be substantiated. Let me tell you that my ministry has been in contact with both the First Nations community and the company in question. We are very happy that the company has chosen to vacate the site and that police levels have returned to normal.

Mr. Hampton: This is not about the company; this is about your promise to consult with First Nations. This is about the Mikisew Supreme Court of Canada decision, which says that before you're going to build a winter road on traditional First Nation territory, before allowing a mining company access to their traditional territory, you must consult with the First Nation about their legitimate interests and rights. You didn't consult with the First Nation; you simply gave this mining company the go-ahead to go into their traditional territory and start drilling, and when people protested, in go the OPP.

I'll tell you, Minister, a chief of NAN and the chief of Big Trout Lake First Nation want to know when the McGuinty government is going to start observing the law of Canada as set down by the Supreme Court of Canada. When are you going to start observing the promise that you specifically made a year ago to First Nations to respect not only their constitutional rights, their treaty rights and their legal rights—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The question has been asked. The Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Mr. Bartolucci: There's absolutely no question that our government is committed, through the Ontario Secretariat for Aboriginal Affairs, to meet our legal obligations with the duty to consult. Ontario is preparing draft consultation guidelines to assist ministries in fulfilling that consultation, and that's being done through the minister responsible and through OSAA.

Let me tell you that when it comes to mining issues, we've very clearly spelled out in our mineral development strategy that the duty to consult will be lived up to as to the Mikisew Supreme Court ruling.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Landowners and farmers in my predominantly rural riding have expressed concerns to me that the proposed Clean Water Act legislation may fail to recognize the realities of rural watershed protection. How can we assure the landowners and farmers in my riding of Northumberland and indeed in all of rural Ontario that they will be listened to during the creation of the watershed-based source protection plan?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I want to thank the member for the question. I think it is important for rural Ontarians to understand that they have a lot of advocates in our government raising issues with respect to the realities of life in rural and agricultural Ontario, among them the minister herself, but certainly the member for Northumberland is a vocal member of our caucus.

Rural communities know how important clean water is and are a leader in water protection. The proposed Clean Water Act builds on the great work they've already done in rural communities right across this province. Agriculture and rural stakeholders were directly involved in helping to develop the proposed act and to ensure that it does not duplicate or conflict with the requirements of managing nutrients. The proposed Clean Water Act would give communities the tools they need to develop and implement local plans to protect vulnerable drinking water. Many of those issues can be addressed through existing activities such as environmental farm plans or new and voluntary partnerships, but we also need risk-management plans, and those risk-management plans will recognize the realities of on-farm initiatives dealing with both nutrient management and environmental farm plans.

Mr. Rinaldi: That's great, Minister. I wonder if you can expand a little bit. Landowners in my riding have come forward to me personally—and I've subsequently written to you and they've written to you directly—with numerous questions and concerns about the Clean Water Act and landowner rights. How are landowner rights protected under the Clean Water Act?

Hon. Ms. Broten: I think it's very critical. I had an opportunity to speak to this issue recently at ROMA meetings. One thing I wanted to make clear to Ontarians across this province is that if a municipal or conservation authority source protection agent has to come on your

farm, they will be fully trained in the appropriate bio-security protocol. The first thing they will do is knock on your door and seek permission to come on to your land. We understand it is critical for farming operations across this province to have safe procedures in place, and we will recognize those procedures. Anyone coming to deal with the Clean Water Act will appreciate and acknowledge that importance by knocking on your door as their first step.

1540

LANDFILL

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): I also have a question for the Minister of the Environment. This question relates to the Carp landfill site, in the west part of Ottawa, operated by the Waste Management of Canada Corp. This site has been operating for 30 years, and is slated to close in four. I have driven by this mountain of garbage thousands of times, with the windows of my car firmly closed. Over the past 20 years—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Come on. Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: We can wait.

The member for Lanark–Carleton.

Mr. Sterling: This is a very serious matter for my constituents, and the people of Stittsville in particular, in Mr. Baird's riding. Over the past 20 years, the population of this area has exploded. Many, many more subdivisions have been approved which are very, very close to this particular site. In January, this waste management corporation put forward a proposal to more than double the capacity of this landfill site to provide landfill room for Ottawa, part of eastern Ontario and some communities in the province of Quebec. Minister, don't you agree that this community has done their fair share in accepting the rest of eastern Ontario's garbage in the past, and will you put a stop to this proposal now?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I want to assure the member that I take the issues that are being raised in this community very seriously. I understand that, at present, the company has expressed its desire to complete an individual EA for its proposal to expand the landfill. My ministry believes that the size of the company's proposed expansion would warrant an individual EA.

To proceed with an individual EA, we will have to have terms of reference and opportunity for the community to come forward and raise a number of important issues. The process is just beginning. In that process, the community will have an opportunity to raise the many issues that I understand are currently being raised in the community with respect to the future of waste management in this area and how they will manage on a going-forward basis. So I do think it is an important issue. My ministry will be paying very close attention.

Mr. Sterling: Your involvement and discretion with regard to what will take place in the future is greatest at this moment. After May 12, you will be receiving an application to approve the terms of reference for the environmental assessment to take place. Mr. Eli El-Chantiry and Janet Stavinga, both councillors in the city of Ottawa, have firmly stated their opinion against the location of the landfill at this particular site. Mayor Bob Chiarelli, in yesterday's Ottawa Citizen, said that it is necessary to look at every possible option to deal with waste, including expansion, incineration and the possibility of using other sites for landfill. Will you ensure that the terms of reference are as wide as possible, and will include these alternatives that the city of Ottawa wants included in the terms of reference?

Hon. Ms. Broten: You're quite right that I would have to approve the company's terms of reference for the individual EA before it would begin. For the individual EA to proceed, the company would have to evaluate alternatives to its proposed undertaking—which is what the member is asking for—identify the potential impacts on human health and the natural and socio-economic environments, demonstrate that it undertook public consultation and identified any concerns, and propose satisfactory solutions to address those concerns. There is nothing which prohibits anyone from seeking the province's approval with respect to a number of alternatives coming forward, but I do need to be clear, as Minister of the Environment: Those alternatives have to be clean, and they can't discourage the use of waste reduction, reuse and recycling.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources.

Minister, you will know that the forest industry is in a very difficult situation. In fact, most of the companies, including Tembec, are pretty cash-strapped and are having to sell assets in order to raise cash to pay some of their bills. You will know that on the Gordon Cosens forest in the Kapuskasing area, the Moonbeam area, there is a plan by Tembec to sell 76,000 hectares of private land. Seeing what happened just recently in northwestern Ontario with Abitibi, where you allowed an American company to buy 196,000 hectares, what are you prepared to do now and to say in this House today that will make sure, if that land is sold, that it is bought by MNR and that the timber be made available to the local logging companies?

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): The company, about three months ago, gave us a heads-up that it was their intention to sell this asset. I've had a full briefing on this. Those lands look very interesting to us—obviously a very important source of timber supply for northeastern Ontario. We are in discussions with the company and getting information from them as to what process they want to embark upon in this. At the

moment, while we haven't made a final decision, we're very cognizant of this and are prepared to work with the company to a successful conclusion.

Mr. Bisson: I know as a fact that there are a number of individuals who are interested in purchasing that 76,000 hectares of land and have gone to take a look and are starting to kick the tires. Your ministry has got to be there, ready to say, "We will purchase that land and bring it back into the crown so that we can make that timber available." There are four and a half million conifer trees in that forest. There are a million and a half aspen trees in that forest, trees that can be used in local mills.

I'm going to say to you now that you got the heads-up three months ago. We're asking you today: Are you prepared to commit, in this House, that, should that land be sold, MNR will be the buyer and those trees will be made available to the local mills?

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: Our officials are very much aware of this land. In fact, up until about six years ago, this was crown land. It was involved in a swap as part of the previous government's Lands for Life exercise. So we're very familiar with this property. It is very valuable timber. We certainly value the availability of that timber to our resources in northeastern Ontario, and are involved in the process.

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): My question is for the Minister of Labour. We recently announced the third increase to the minimum wage in just three years. That makes three times that this government has increased the minimum wage since it took office. This is an even more remarkable achievement given that the previous government chose to freeze the minimum wage for nine long years, creating hardship and denying support for those most vulnerable. But wait, there's more—

Interjections.

Mr. Fonseca: Yes, more. The same time next year, there will be yet another increase, raising Ontario's minimum wage to \$8 per hour, in line with the highest rates in the country.

Minister, please explain to those who decry any raise in the minimum wage why this government chose to show compassion rather than contempt for low-income earners.

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): I thank the honourable member for the question. We made a promise and we kept that promise. For too long in this province, some of our most vulnerable people had not had a raise in the minimum wage. The previous Tories ignored vulnerable people in this province. We're committed to looking after some of the most vulnerable people in this province because we want to allow low-income earners to share in the wealth that is being created by Ontarians in this province. As well, though, we recognize the need for responsible implementation. That's why we made the commitment to phase it in over a four-year period.

The Dalton McGuinty government believes in the people of this province. We believe in investing in our

people, and we want to make sure that our most vulnerable are looked after. That's why this investment is being made. It was the right thing to do, and I'm proud that we've continued on with this.

1550

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of concerned citizens of Sherkston about property assessment growth. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the rural community of Sherkston, of the city of Port Colborne, in the Niagara region, sponsored two community meetings regarding the sharply higher market value for their homes; and

"Whereas in Ontario, many young families and seniors find it a financial hardship; and

"Whereas we, the taxpayers, are finding it increasingly difficult to make ends meet, with increasing hydro rates, higher gasoline prices, a new health tax and virtually all costs of running a home and caring for a family; and

"Whereas another tax hike by way of a property tax increase due to spikes in property assessment is unacceptable; and

"Whereas, due to these tax increases in Ontario, many working families and seniors will be forced out of their homes and the community that they love; and

"Whereas the erosion of working families' and seniors' income has become a landslide;

"We, the undersigned, request the province of Ontario to immediately provide relief and remedy to working families and seniors who are hit hard by these unacceptable spikes in the likely property tax increases to come; and

That the province of Ontario be requested to end its continued downloading of provincial programs and use of municipal property tax dollars for the subsidization of provincial health and social services programs; and

That the provincial government work with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario to develop a plan to begin the uploading of provincial program costs back to where they belong.

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Parliament of Ontario to acknowledge our requests and treat citizens of Ontario fairly."

I thank Cathy Diplock and the hard-working volunteers in Sherkston, and I sign it in support.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that has been signed by hundreds of people from Toronto. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Bill 36, the Local Health System Integration Act, 2006, is currently before the Legislative Assembly and may be passed by March 2; and

"Whereas the bill would lead to the transformation of our public health system; and

"Whereas there are serious concerns in our community about the potential impact of this transformation concerning access to health care services, public delivery of services and central control of local health care services; and

"Whereas there should be broad public understanding of this transformation before enacting such fundamental change; and

"Whereas there is no such broad public understanding;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to delay passage of this bill to allow for wider public consultation to ensure a broad public understanding of the transformation that is proposed."

I agree with the petitioners. I have affixed my signature to this.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition here that is headed, "The Need for More Daycare Spaces for Ontarians." It reads as follows:

"To the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas there is a well-documented need for daycare spaces in the province of Ontario;

"Whereas the former government of Canada and the present government of Ontario recognize that need;

"Whereas the government of Canada committed \$1.87 billion over five years and the government of Ontario continues to commit \$700,000 a year for the purpose of expanding daycare spaces for Canadians;

"Therefore" and finally, "we, the undersigned citizens, call on the newly elected federal Canadian government to live up to the signed agreement between the government of Ontario and the government of Canada to provide thousands of daycare spaces for our children in the province of Ontario."

Since I agree, I'm delighted to sign this petition.

FREDERICK BANTING HOMESTEAD

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): It's my pleasure to present a petition here that I've been waiting anxiously to present.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Sir Frederick Banting was the man who discovered insulin and was Canada's first Nobel Prize recipient; and

"Whereas this great Canadian's original homestead, located in the town of New Tecumseth, is deteriorating and in danger of destruction because of the inaction of the Ontario Historical Society; and

"Whereas the town of New Tecumseth has been unsuccessful in reaching an agreement with the Ontario

Historical Society to use part of the land to educate the public about the historical significance of the work of Sir Frederick Banting;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Culture endorse Simcoe-Grey MPP Jim Wilson's private member's bill entitled the Frederick Banting Homestead Preservation Act so that the homestead is kept in good repair and preserved for generations to come."

I'm pleased to sign this and endorse it on behalf of Jim Wilson and the people of his riding.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the people of Ontario expect the government of Canada to honour existing agreements with the government of Ontario;

"Whereas provinces and territories negotiated agreements with the federal government to ensure Canadians would have access to early learning and child care programs that are high quality, affordable, universally inclusive and developmental;

"Whereas parents in Ontario have demonstrated a high demand for greater access to high-quality early learning and child care programs;

"Whereas Ontario's early learning and child care agreement with the government of Canada would provide Ontario families with at least 25,000 new high-quality, regulated child care spaces in the first three years;

"Whereas Ontario's early learning and child care agreement represents a \$1.9-billion investment over five years in high-quality early learning and child care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the government of Ontario in calling on the government of Canada to honour Ontario's early learning and child care agreement, for the sake of the thousands of Ontario families who would benefit from it."

I agree with this petition, and I give it to page Ian.

LANDFILL

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): "We, the undersigned residents of the province of Ontario, draw the attention of the House to the following:

"That the city of Orillia has two landfills on the shore of Lake Simcoe;

"That in 1991, it was reported that over 78 million litres of leachate, from the operating landfill, enters the waterways, including Lake Simcoe, every year;

"That five municipalities depend on Lake Simcoe for drinking water;

"That in November 2004 the city disposed of contaminated soil at the operating site;

"That this contaminated soil was excavated from a brownfield site where groundwater tests revealed vinyl chloride at 82,600 times the MOE limit and trichloroethylene at almost 15,000 times the MOE limit, as well as several other hazardous compounds that also exceeded MOE limits;

"That selected soil samples, used for testing for waste disposal purposes, were blended and dry and only four samples were used to test over 40,000 tonnes.

"That no order from the minister was provided to the city of Orillia as required in the certificate of approval; and

"That, even though it was reported in the Legislature that the city would store the soil in windrows, the soil was actually bulldozed into the landfill.

"Therefore, your petitioners call upon the provincial government to protect our drinking water supply by requiring the city of Orillia to remove the 40,000-plus tonnes of contaminated soil from the landfill and, further, require the city of Orillia to develop leachate collection and treatment systems at both lakeside landfills."

I will present this to Marc to take down.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition which I've received from constituents in my riding regarding Bill 36. I just wanted to table this with the Clerk today. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. I'll just hand it to page Nicholas.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I have the same petition as the member for Scarborough Southwest, but I'm going to read it. The undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Whereas Bill 36, the Local Health System Integration Act, 2006, is currently before the Legislative Assembly and may be passed by March 2;"—it will be passed today—"and

"Whereas the bill would lead to the transformation of our public health care system; and

"Whereas there are serious concerns in our community about the potential impact of this transformation concerning access to health care services, public delivery of services, and central control of local health care services; and

"Whereas there should be a broad public understanding of this transformation before enacting such fundamental change; and

"Whereas there is no such broad public understanding;

"Therefore we, the undersigned," petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario "to delay passage of this bill" to allow wider "public consultations to ensure a broad public understanding of the transformation proposed."

I support this petition, affix my name to it, and will pass it to the table through Anindita.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

"Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

"Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community."

It's signed by a number of residents from Port Alma, Charing Cross, Merlin, and across the river in Paincourt, and I too affix my signature.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LOCAL HEALTH SYSTEM INTEGRATION ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR L'INTÉGRATION DU SYSTÈME DE SANTÉ LOCAL

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 22, 2006, on the motion for third reading of Bill 36, An Act to provide for the integration of the local system for the delivery of health services / Projet de loi 36, Loi prévoyant l'intégration du système local de prestation des services de santé.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to the order of the House dated February 28, 2006, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Smitherman has moved third reading of Bill 36. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1601 to 1611.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour will please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bountrogianni, Marie
Bradley, James J.

Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John
Hoy, Pat
Jeffrey, Linda
Kennedy, Gerard

Patten, Richard
Peters, Steve
Peterson, Tim
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra

Brotten, Laurel C.
Brownell, Jim
Bryant, Michael
Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Chambers, Mary Anne V.
Colle, Mike
Cordiano, Joseph
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Di Cocco, Caroline
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad
Duncan, Dwight
Flynn, Kevin Daniel

Kular, Kuldip
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Levac, Dave
Marsales, Judy
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McGuinty, Dalton
McMeekin, Ted
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Mossop, Jennifer F.
Oraziotti, David
Parsons, Ernie

Qaadri, Shafiq
Racco, Mario G.
Ramal, Khalil
Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Smith, Monique
Smitherman, George
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilkinson, John
Wong, Tony C.
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please stand and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles
Chudleigh, Ted
Dunlop, Garfield
Hampton, Howard
Hardeman, Ernie
Horwath, Andrea
Hudak, Tim

Jackson, Cameron
Klees, Frank
Kormos, Peter
Marchese, Rosario
Martel, Shelley
Martiniuk, Gerry
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
O'Toole, John

Runciman, Robert W.
Scott, Laurie
Sterling, Norman W.
Tascona, Joseph N.
Tory, John
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakubski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 60; the nays are 26.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES SERVICES À L'ENFANCE ET À LA FAMILLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 28, 2006, on the motion for third reading of Bill 210, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act and make complementary amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 210, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille et apportant des modifications complémentaires à d'autres lois.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Hamilton East has the floor.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I enjoyed the couple of minutes I had yesterday speaking about Bill 210, and I'm looking forward to continuing to raise some of the issues that New Democrats identified going through the process of clause-by-clause and the public hearings on Bill 210. I want to recap a little bit some of the issues I raised in yesterday's discussion because I think they're important and need to be reinforced in terms of what we saw as being the important pieces.

The very first was that, notwithstanding the need to have some reform of this child welfare system in Ontario, the government initially did not pay due attention to its obligations to engage First Nations in discussion from a

governance perspective on the issues that are related to the care of their children and the way this legislation affects child welfare in First Nations.

I spoke a lot about that yesterday, so I'm not going to belabour the point, but I can tell you that initially the government began a process of very restricted timetables and opportunity for public input. We saw that as a dangerous and inappropriate thing to do and spent some time, both through subcommittee and through the calling around of First Nations—some people may not realize that there are 134 First Nation communities in Ontario. There are a significant number of people this bill affects from the First Nations' perspective. We spent some time talking to some First Nations leaders, asking, "Do you know this bill is coming forward? Are you aware of the process? If you are concerned, or if you in any way want to have a voice, now is the time."

We were actually not surprised, because we had a suspicion the government didn't do its homework in terms of its obligations around First Nations consultation, that, lo and behold, we were assured that was the case when First Nation after First Nation came forward to say to the government, first of all, "This bill is the wrong thing to do. We can't support it in any way whatsoever," that it was not being brought forward in a way that was in the spirit of the federal and provincial requirements for dialogue, from a governance perspective, with First Nations leadership, and that, second, there were pieces of the bill that were absolutely offensive to First Nations communities in terms of their child welfare system.

I want to put two particular pieces on the record that I omitted yesterday because I needed to get on with other issues. One is that the government, in its first draft of the bill, actually decided, in a section that deals with the kinds of regulations that can be set by the Lieutenant Governor, and put in place a clause—I suspect that they did so, although I don't know for sure because I wasn't on that side of the table, but certainly they put a clause in there that basically provided the opportunity for the Lieutenant Governor to simply create regulations for First Nations communities without any consultation with First Nations communities, amending the act by adding a clause allowing them to put together regulations governing "procedures, practices and standards for customary care." "Customary care" is the care of First Nations communities children.

First Nations were appalled that the government would be so ignorant of its responsibilities as to actually put this clause forward. It was through the hearings process that we were able to force the government into longer and more fulsome discussions with First Nations communities, and in fact that was withdrawn by the government. It was replaced by a resolution, a motion, that I brought forward at committee that changed that to say that the regulations would be those "governing consultations with bands and native communities under sections 213 and 213.1 and prescribing the procedures and practices to be followed by societies and agencies and the duties of societies and agencies during the consultations."

So you can see the difference, and it's a very important one. I think that one change really reflects the difference between where the government started in terms of Bill 210 and where it ended up.

1620

Having said that, yesterday I did spend some time reading and presenting in the Legislature and getting on the record a resolution that came forward from the First Nations leadership. It's in the Hansard; I'm not going to read it again today because I don't have the time. Again, I feel awkward sort of putting this on the record on their behalf, because I think they've done an excellent job of doing that. Their presentations are in the Hansard, so if anybody is interested in finding out what the concerns of First Nations communities are, in their own voice, I really urge you to look up those Hansards of the four different days that public hearings took place, as well as some of the discussion that went on around the clause-by-clause debate of the bill.

I know other members of my caucus are going to have something to say about Bill 210, and I look forward to those remarks, but the other thing I wanted to say is that there is an overall concern that First Nations have around this government's and other governments' lack of acknowledgement, of the short shrift that they get pretty much in every piece of legislation and every institution that we have in Ontario. So in that vein, what I had done was put forward a motion that was, in fact, not in order because it addressed a part of the bill that was not up for discussion, really. One of the things that the government decided to do was to actually allow for that to be put on the table. It was an important piece, and I want to read that as well because, again, I'm just trying to illustrate the fact that had we not been there voicing these concerns and putting these issues on the table, I don't believe that Bill 210 would be anywhere near where it is now in terms of trying to address the concerns that came forward from First Nations communities.

This is an amendment to the bill that wasn't actually even open for discussion but, through unanimous consent of the parties at the table—the Conservatives had their member there as well—we amended part XII of the act by adding a totally new section that deals with the review of aboriginal issues. It says, "Every review of this act shall include a review of provisions imposing obligations on societies"—that's children's aid societies—"when providing services to a person who is an Indian or native person or in respect of children who are Indian or native persons, with a view to ensuring compliance by societies with those provisions."

So that says that every time we review this act—and there is an obligation in the act that it gets reviewed every five years, but even if it's outside of the requirements of the act—it's done so as to ensure that children's aid societies are seriously taking a look at the way in which, the extent to which, and the failure, in some cases, in which they are meeting the needs of First Nations individuals and children.

I thought it was really important to get those two items on the record, because without the New Democrats doing

our work with First Nations and making sure that they were even aware that this bill was coming down the pike and ensuring that they had the opportunity to have something to say about it, lots of these changes, I don't think, would be before us this afternoon in terms of the revised bill.

I also spent some time yesterday talking about the request that everyone knows came forward from the Ombudsman. It was a very public request. It was a very thoughtful request that children's aid societies come under the purview of the Ombudsman's office for purposes of receiving complaints and doing investigations. I did speak about this yesterday, as I mentioned, but I think it's important to remind members of the community who might be watching that this is a simple situation that was requested by the Ombudsman. It's no different from what happens in many provinces across the country, that there is a completely unbiased, neutral third party that already has all of the training and all of the staffing and all of the structure, if you will, and all the authority and all the understanding of how to go about these things, to investigate complaints laid against children's aid societies.

One final piece to that is: Unfortunately, instead of undertaking the Ombudsman's request and approving the amendment that New Democrats put forward in that regard, the government decided to set up an internal system through the Child and Family Services Review Board, which would hear complaints or appeals of complaints that weren't addressed to the satisfaction of the complainant. The problem with that—it was even indicated by the Ombudsman—is that it's still not a totally neutral external body reviewing the information. The minister will say, "The Ombudsman can review those decisions," but the bottom line is, if you sat in those committee hearings, you would have seen and heard from people who had reached a level of frustration that was off the Richter scale in terms of their inability to get justice within the system. That's not a blame thing; that's simply noting that there is a big, big roadblock for people to get justice within that system.

What does that system do? It removes children from their families where there is a suspicion of abuse or evidence of abuse and sets them into other places of care. If families can't be sure and if children can't be sure that they can get a fair complaint review process internally, which is what they've indicated already, then it's up to us as legislators to do the right thing and make sure that that level of scrutiny is the very highest that we could possibly provide them with. It's too important for the children, it's too important for the families and it's too important for all of those people who came and gave heart-wrenching stories of frustration about how the system dealt with them. I'm quite disappointed that the minister didn't see to it to provide Ontario children and families with oversight by the Ombudsman's office, and very disappointed that that amendment did not get passed because the government members voted against it.

There are a couple of other issues that I think are important that need to be put on the record about Bill

210. One is the issue that was raised—and people may recall this. It didn't get a lot of media attention, but there was an article that was published in the *Toronto Star*. It was about something called the aging-out process. I wanted to just read this again; I did this in the second reading debate on this bill. People say, "What does 'aging out' mean?" Aging out is the time at which a child who has been under the protection of the children's aid society as a crown ward begins to reach the age at which the legislation requires that they no longer receive the support of the children's aid society, the foster home or wherever they happen to be placed.

I wanted to frame this, first of all, by telling you a little bit about some research that was prepared by a woman named Anne Twedde. It's a discussion around modernizing income security programs overall. One of the pieces that she touches on is "Youth Leaving Care: How Do They Fare?" What she said is that "recent international research examining outcomes for youth after they 'age out' of the child welfare system paints a disturbing picture. The findings show that, compared to their peers, youth aging out of care are more likely to"—and then there are a number of bullets listed:

- "leave school before completing their secondary education;

- "become a parent at a young age;

- "be dependent on social assistance;

- "be unemployed or underemployed;

- "be incarcerated/involved with the criminal justice system;

- "experience homelessness;

- "have mental health problems; and

- "be at higher risk for substance abuse problems."

There are a number of other issues that are outlined in this report. But I have to say, as a parent—and I'm sure anyone else who's either watching or here in the Legislature who's a parent will know that these are not the kinds of outcomes we want to see for our children, so why are they the kinds of outcomes that we're prepared to live with for children who become a part of our child welfare system? That's a question that I couldn't figure out: why we would allow our system to continue to put children at risk of these kinds of outcomes as they age out of the system.

1630

Just as another piece to that story, the story that was in the *Toronto Star*, written by Carol Goar back in October of last year, says that "no amount of semantic cushioning can soften what, in real life, is a brutal transition.

"At the age of 18, crown wards, whose only parent has been the state for most or all of their lives, suddenly have no parent." They're cut loose. "They're on their own."

The article goes on to describe a number of facts around what that means and what kind of income support is available and issues of that nature. But the reason I'm raising it is because I thought that was a significant piece that was missing from the legislation. I thought that this was the opportunity, in this review—again, remember, this legislation is required to be reviewed every five

years. Five years is too long to wait for five more years of children, of youth, who are aging out of our child welfare system. It's inconceivable that we would not address this issue at this point in time. Unfortunately, the government has chosen not to address that situation at this point in time.

I mentioned earlier that the minister did sit down with me, prior to having the bill called for third reading, to indicate where she thought some of my concerns were and how she thought she was going to deal with those from the broader system's perspective. At that time—and I'll be quite blunt about it and quite fair about it—she indicated that she was concerned about that issue as well because, the first time in debate, people may recall, I likened it to the fact that, even with our children, it's no longer the case where at 18 years old, they're out of the house and on their own. In fact, it's more likely that they are going to be 25 or 30 before they're out of the house and on their own. So why is it that we can expect this level of independence for children, especially youth who have been through some of the brutal experiences that put them in the child welfare system in the first place?

What she said is that they're going to do some things, working with agencies and communities to try to find ways to transition young people from the crown ward system into independent living. That's fine and laudable, but unless it is enshrined in the legislation, there is no guarantee that the children and youth of Ontario can expect, realistically, that not only this government but the next government and the next and the next are going to be committed to providing those resources and, in fact, are going to be obligated to provide those resources.

People can be assured that I certainly did put that on the record. I have many amendments that I have moved at committee—unfortunately, all of them were turned down—around extended care and maintenance, not only in terms of aging out but also in terms of various kinds of arrangements that are made for children in the new system that the government brought forward through Bill 210. I say that because it's not just a matter of the resources as children age out. That's certainly important. It's in the motions that I put forward, but they didn't get accepted.

The other piece is that the government's discussions around Bill 210 and the reasons for it talk about making more permanent placements, more permanent connections, more stable environments for children who become part of the child welfare system. From my perspective and the perspectives of other people who made presentations at the hearings, one of the things that is a barrier to the stability of a placement is resources. So some of the motions that I put forward were around extended care and maintenance agreements and the extent to which the financial and other—financial, yes, but also programming and support—agreements were required to be maintained as, for example, children move into a foster care situation or into the care of a grandparent, or into a situation where they're in the broader community because that's what's determined to be in the best interests of the child.

The bottom line is, unless the resources are going with those children that ensure that they're connected to some of the things that assist them in their ability to cope on a day-to-day basis—whether they happen to be children with disabilities, whether it's an emotional and stress type of trauma that needs to be dealt with, whether there are educational supports that need to be put in place or that are in place, or whether it's simply in terms of financial supports, as these children are transitioned into these other forms of care, there really should be an obligation to support them so that those new, more permanent relationships that we're trying to get in the province of Ontario are backed up by some resources to help them grow and prosper into solid relationships and thereby give those young people and children a chance to have a bright future.

There was one other major piece that I thought was, let's say, an opportunity that Bill 210 brought forward. That was the opportunity for the government to use this discussion about child welfare to acknowledge and bring forward their commitment of about a year ago now, which was to make the office of the child advocate completely independent. I did actually put forward a motion as well in that regard. I have it with me here. It's not a completely difficult thing to do; in fact, the motion itself is barely a page long. It basically suggests that within 30 days of this bill coming into force, the Lieutenant Governor in Council shall, on the address of the Legislative Assembly, appoint a person to be the child advocate, to be responsible for the operation of the Office of Child and Family Services Advocacy, but that the child advocate is an officer of the assembly, which makes them independent. It also talks about the term of office, removal from office and the requirement to report to the Legislative Assembly.

The bottom line is that the previous minister made a commitment about the office of the child advocate last year, that it was extremely important that it be a separate, independent office of this Legislature. It hasn't happened yet. During the clause-by-clause discussion, there was some faint hope because government members did, in turning down this motion, indicate that there was something coming forward. So now we have another promise on record saying that legislation is coming forward to make the office of the child advocate independent. I certainly look forward to that legislation, because it's long overdue and it certainly will help in providing an opportunity for people to have an independent advocate, a voice or basically somebody who children and families can go to, and constantly move up the bar in the way that we as a province deal with children's issues.

There are a number of other smaller pieces to the bill, but I think I've outlined where we agreed with the government and where we disagreed in terms of missed opportunities, in our opinion. I know that my leader, Howard Hampton, has some things that he wants to put on the record in regard to Bill 210. I know that my colleague Peter Kormos, the member from Niagara Centre, also has issues that he was concerned about that

are enshrined in this bill. They'll be speaking to it a little later.

One of those is the use of alternative dispute resolution. Interestingly enough, I had the opportunity to review one of the presenters, the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses. I mentioned yesterday in my discussion a little bit about some of their concerns around the entire system and how at every phase there should be screening for domestic violence. One of the things they highlight in their report is the issue of alternative dispute resolution and the extent to which domestic violence is something that is often not appropriately taken into consideration.

Interjection.

Ms. Horwath: There you go. The member from Niagara Centre is talking about a particular study from London on mediation. I believe that is actually referenced in this report.

The issue is that abusers tend to be very manipulative—that's the history of the relationship not only with the spouse but often with the children—and to what extent that gets perpetuated through the ADR process and to what extent the type of ADR you're using may not be able to address the power imbalances and the historic manipulation that occurs in situations of woman abuse and family violence.

Having said that, I'm almost finished with my remarks. I'm just going to do one last quick list of some of the concerns we had with Bill 210. The first is the dismal consultation with First Nations and, as a result of the activity of New Democrats, the eventual opening up of the process to get some of those voices to the table but also some changes to the bill that have left First Nations in a position where initially they were saying, "This a terrible bill and we hate it," and now they're saying, in a more measured response, that they see it as a step in the right direction but want the government to commit to the establishment of a completely separate child welfare system for First Nations. So there's that.

1640

The independent oversight by the Ombudsman was not dealt with by the government. On the issue of aging out and increasing the age at which youth are able to maintain supports, we suggested that it should be at least the age of 25, to acknowledge that young people need those supports as they try to move on with their lives. The lack of extended care and maintenance agreements, and the lack of an independent child advocate being ingrained in the bill—those are my remarks.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I'm delighted to be able to speak today on this bill to do with the rules around adoption in the province of Ontario. I am a great cheerleader for my local family and children's services in the Guelph area. One of the principles that they have always worked by is that the best placement for a child is an adoption placement, a permanent placement. The second preferred placement is stable foster care, and finally, a group home. They have always stuck

to that principle, regardless of the funding model which the previous government imposed on them. They have always stuck to this model, and I support them and congratulate them on this. This bill will support them in their work, in their priority.

In fact, when you look at the adoption legislation as it is today, it's quite outdated. It's really based on the presumption that children who are put up for adoption are coming as infants into the city, put up largely by young women who have had babies out of wedlock. Of course, that is no longer true. Many of the children who come into the child welfare system today come from very difficult situations, from families which for one reason or another have not been able to take care of the child as well as one might hope. In those cases, unless it's been an abusive relationship, the birth family often maintains a right of contact.

Under the current legislation, if the birth family is allowed contact, then adoption is not allowed. This legislation fixes that. It allows an open adoption in which there may still be some contact with the birth family. It also makes it easier for relatives, including grandparents, to provide permanent homes for kids within their family, and it creates a number of other options which are very helpful to my children's aid.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I'd like to compliment the member from Hamilton East, who has worked on this in committee to protect children and also our member from York North. I think, ultimately, the intention here is well-founded. If you look at the preamble of the bill, you see that the key areas of amendment are planning permanency for children, openness in adoption and an alternative dispute resolution process—all very laudable objectives that I believe would benefit children.

There are some issues here with kinship care, trying to arrange adoptions closer to the kinship relationship. There's been input by First Nations, who weren't quite satisfied with that resolve.

I think we all want this to work in the best interests of children, to be placed in conditions of safety—safety first—and to have a process to make sure that happens. But I think there have been a couple of noteworthy inquests in the last year or so of a child having been placed in kinship care where in fact the child was treated poorly and died. That's a case that was just before the courts.

Sometimes in our ridings we get concerns from grandparents and other issues on these children's aid interventions to protect children, the need to demonstrate this, and the really nasty intrusion into families. In many cases, it's absolutely justified, but I find it difficult to get to the children's aid societies sometimes. I know it's a priority area.

What I want to pay close attention to in my remarks later on this afternoon is that the Ombudsman has expressed similar concerns. I don't think it has been addressed in the bill—I think it was skated around—that they should provide a mechanism to resolve some of these concerns of the Ombudsman. That is what's

missing here. We've got to err on the side of the safety of children first.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I, on behalf of the NDP caucus, want to thank Andrea Horwath for her diligence in working with Bill 210. She has, during the course of second reading, through committee and now at the point of third reading, worked incredibly hard representing the interests of native communities, aboriginal communities, expressing their concerns around the bill and moving amendments that start—start—to address those concerns. She has, in a remarkable way, addressed and advocated for amendments that would provide for independent oversight by the Ombudsman here in the province of Ontario, an incredibly important proposition.

Don't forget: children's aid societies, as we may call them colloquially, are private organizations with their own boards, yet they possess more power than the Ministry of Revenue, than police forces, than the immigration department. I know folks who work in children's aid societies and people who manage them, and they run from very, very good and very competent to incredibly overworked, understaffed and under-resourced. When that happens, people get put at risk—I'm talking about organizations that are understaffed and under-resourced.

I personally and fundamentally have some problems about the lack of public accountability. The children's aid society, in my view, is an anachronism. It predates this century; it predates, at least philosophically, the last century.

But that isn't the focus of the bill. I'm going to have the opportunity, along with Howard Hampton, the leader of the NDP, to speak to this bill later this afternoon. Both of us will be expressing some concerns about the legislation and the failure of the government to get it right when it could have gotten it right.

Ms. Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): I am pleased to stand to respond to some of the comments in regard to Bill 210, which is now before the House. I just want to remind us here in the Legislature that this bill is now stronger. It's stronger because we have gone through committee hearings, and we have adapted and taken on a number of amendments to strengthen some features, which include accountability for children's aid societies.

It's important that we remember that part of the process of good legislation is that one goes to committee, listens to the advice that is provided by those stakeholders and other members of this Legislature, and adapts that to the bill and amends it.

I just want to make a comment about the fact that the Child and Family Services Statute Law Amendment Act, 2006, makes it easier for children in need of protection to find a permanent home. It makes adoption more flexible by allowing more children to be adopted while still maintaining ties to their birth family and community. Again, it makes it easier for relatives, including grandparents, to provide a permanent home for those children and youth who need one.

As a grandparent, I certainly understand the role that grandparents have when it comes to their grandchildren.

To be able to have that opportunity to embrace the responsibility, should the circumstances be such, is great for the children and for those who are providing the care. I'm really pleased to say that this bill is certainly going to make a better place for children in need.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Hamilton East has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Horwath: I want to thank the members from Guelph—

Mrs. Sandals: Guelph-Wellington.

Ms. Horwath: Guelph-Wellington, Durham, Niagara Centre and Sarnia-Lambton for their comments. It's important that people note that what the government members say in their remarks is about all of the things that most people would agree are positive aspects of the bill, positive goals, laudable goals of Bill 210 around ensuring that children who are in need of protection by the state or by the province, by the crown—the crown wards—are able to more successfully be adopted. Certainly, everybody would agree that that's an important goal. Also, the options around what happens to those children through the process of determining where they get placed and where they end up, if you want to put it that way, are certainly positive moves.

1650

I guess what I need to reiterate, though, is that this government had some opportunities to do some other really positive and important things with this bill. I don't take too much issue with what they've already done in some ways—although, having said that, there are still issues around First Nations communities that I think they've not done well with—but there are issues around Ombudsman oversight, there are issues around extended care and maintenance, there are issues around the independence of the child advocate, and there are issues still remaining around resourcing, not only of children's aid societies, but of the designation of agencies within First Nations to be able to provide these kinds of services.

So there are a number of pieces that the government needs to think about in terms of moving forward, and it's unfortunate that Bill 210 didn't deal with some of these really quite important pieces. Had they done so, this bill would be absolutely the panacea for children of Ontario. Unfortunately, it's second-best.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I'm pleased to rise to talk about Bill 210, our government's child protection legislation, which is before us again for third reading.

Following second reading debate, Bill 210 received extensive public hearings from delegations from across the province. I wanted to take a few moments to reiterate some of the comments and suggestions from the various agencies we heard from.

Tikanagan Child and Family Services is one of the oldest and largest aboriginal children's aid societies in Ontario. They provide comprehensive child protection services to a large geographic area north of the 50th parallel, which includes 30 remote First Nations and

several small towns and villages. They have pioneered a process of alternative dispute resolution, Talking Together. It's an innovative form of dispute resolution practised as an alternative to the family court system and is based on traditional circles held in the communities.

During clause-by-clause, we adopted an NDP motion in section 5 of the bill on the issue of alternative dispute resolution. The motion states that where a society is considering ADR to resolve a dispute, the society must consult with a native child's band to determine if ADR, established by the band or under regulation, would help resolve the dispute. As well, we would require the CAS—the children's aid society—to give notice of ADR, which would enable the First Nations representatives to provide culturally appropriate support and input into the process of dispute resolution.

From the time of the announcement of the formation of the child welfare secretariat, the Children's Aid Society of Toronto has been enthusiastically supportive of the new directions being contemplated by our government. The agency in Toronto serves over 33,000 children a year and provides daily care for about 1,000 crown wards. During public hearings, CAS Toronto was optimistic that Bill 210 would promote permanency options which have been unavailable until now for the vast majority of children and youth.

Carolyn Buck, the interim executive director for CAS Toronto, said, "This bill demonstrates that you have heard many issues identified by professionals in this field, as well as those identified by our clients who have received service."

The Adoption Council of Ontario supported this bill. As an umbrella organization with the adoption community, they advocate for adopted persons and all people connected with adoption. Their mandate focuses on four areas: adoption information, adoption education, support and advocacy. Their mission is to provide support to individuals, families, groups and organizations in Ontario that are concerned with adoption. ACO believes that this legislation will lift the existing barriers for children and clear the way for permanency planning that can allow for more flexibility and greater options. They welcome efforts to address the confusing and cumbersome system of adoption in Ontario.

Legal Aid Ontario is also supportive of the direction of this bill and cited that it's a signal of a major shift in thinking in the child protection field. Legal Aid was particularly supportive of the increased flexibility in how children's aid societies can use their funding with the goal of keeping children in their own homes. Of particular interest to Legal Aid Ontario is the introduction of alternative dispute resolution processes in the area of child protection.

In section 10 of the bill we put forward an amendment which would permit parties to an assessment to agree upon an assessor within a time frame specified by the court. We heard from aboriginal leaders who expressed concern about the cultural competence of court-ordered assessments and the lack of input regarding who should

be deemed appropriate to perform an assessment of an aboriginal child and/or their family.

Family Service Ontario is a provincial umbrella organization representing approximately 50 family service agencies in the province, of which the Catholic Family Services of Peel-Dufferin is one. FSO touted 210 as an excellent bill, because it really tries to balance the two priorities that a children's aid society has: first, to protect children, and second, to enhance the wellness of children by supporting their parents. Bill 210 will allow children who come into the care of children's aid societies to have the same opportunities of children who have been placed through a private adoption system.

This is a stronger, improved bill that better protects the interests of children and youth who are in need of protection. I would urge all my colleagues in this House to support Bill 210. Our children cannot wait any longer. Vote to support and protect our children. They deserve no less. Please support the Child and Family Services Statute Law Amendment Act, Bill 210. We need your support.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Kormos: I listened briefly to the comments made by the member, not because I didn't listen to all of the comments but because her brevity was in and of itself outstanding.

This is serious stuff. I'm going to have a chance to speak to this a little bit later in the afternoon. I'm going to repeat one more time: Real reform around family and children's services has to take into consideration the fact that the family and children's services agencies, that structure, is an anachronism, that it predates government interest and involvement and participation in this social work approach, this caring and protection of children.

We know, based on the experiences in our offices, how publicly unaccountable child and family services are, FACS are, children's aid societies. We know how difficult it is, from time to time, to get them to respond to concerns. That's why I find it amazing that the government would block Ms. Horwath and her proposal around amendments that would create Ombudsman office oversight. Banks do it: insurance companies do it. Any government agency is subject to the supervision of the Ombudsman. And if family and children's services, FACS, isn't going to be subject to the Ombudsman and its oversight, then maybe it's time that FACS was simply dismantled and turned into a public agency that has accountability through the minister responsible here in the Legislative Assembly. That's not to speak ill of any of those hard-working professionals who work in children's aid across Ontario. It would be to their benefit as well.

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): The real test for this new legislation is one simple question: Does it make it better for the children of Ontario? Given my years as a foster parent, my privilege to be an adoptive parent, my years on the children's aid board, my involvement, my answer is that it makes it resoundingly better.

It is difficult for us, I think, to imagine being a child of four or five years old and removed from birth parents, sometimes under very difficult circumstances, and then placed in a foster home. I am privileged to know so many good foster homes, yet from the child's viewpoint, being taken from the birth parents is to be sentenced to a foster home, no matter how high-quality it is. What children want is stability and permanence in their life. They do not want to move. They do not want to know that tomorrow is uncertain and there could be a change. For a four- or five-year-old, or even an 11- or 12-year-old, the uncertainty is totally disruptive in their life.

This bill provides for some permanency planning that I think is truly creative and will truly work.

1700

Traditionally, becoming a crown ward—and for those who are not aware, when becoming a crown ward, the courts I say that your birth parents are no longer able or willing to serve as your parents, and our government becomes responsible for them. To become a crown ward with access, meaning that there can be contact between the birth parents and the child, has traditionally meant that that child is unadoptable; that child will spend their life in limbo. This bill provides for some creativity that will allow them to be adopted, even if they have access on their order, into families; it will allow for some guardianship; and it will allow for some permanency, so that the child can get up each morning and, even more, go to bed at night knowing what will happen tomorrow and what will happen 10 years from tomorrow. I think the bill is marvellous.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): There's a fight over here as to who wishes to go first.

I'm pleased to spend two minutes on Bill 210, the Child and Family Services Statute Law Amendment Act, 2005, for this really is an important bill. I know that all of us would like, if at all possible, to help children receive a permanent home. The difficulty has been that in the past, because of the act, children were not available, or not attractive, because of constraints or access by former parents. We all join in hoping that this particular bill, which I will be supporting, in fact will expedite and make available for adoption those children who were not available in the past. This is important, because we're talking about children in their vulnerable years, the time of their formation, and without the permanency of an adoptive and loving atmosphere, these children could go astray. We, of course, are ultimately responsible for them.

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): Thank you for giving me the chance again to speak in support of Bill 210. I had the chance to listen to my colleague from Brampton Centre when she was talking about the bill, about the importance of passing this bill. Also, I was listening to many different members who were talking about many different elements.

I think this bill is very important for the people of Ontario, for the children of Ontario, to make adoption in

general more flexible and allow people to adopt many different children who are looking for parents to look after them and nurture them for the future.

So many elements have been brought up, especially about aboriginal people. To my knowledge, the minister met with aboriginal people many different times, and she spoke with them. Not many people know that they have a different customary care system, which means differences from spot to spot. The minister acknowledged those differences and talked to them on many different occasions to address their issue and deal with it in a professional and legal manner.

Also, for the people who are looking to adopt kids, this bill will allow grandparents and family with a kinship—it's very important—to keep the kids inside the family, if possible, before they send them out to different people to try to look after them. I think this bill gives flexibility to many people in this province. It gives flexibility to the grandparents and to a family member to adopt a loved one in their own families. If this bill is passed, it's going to make a huge difference for many kids in this province.

I was also listening to the member from Hastings, who was talking about it from first-hand experience. This person has experience being a foster parent for a long time, and I have listened to him on different occasions talk about the importance of this bill. He gave me great information. That's why I'm going to support the bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Brampton Centre, you have two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Jeffrey: I'd like to thank my colleagues from Niagara Centre, Prince Edward-Hastings, Cambridge and London-Fanshawe.

In the remaining time I have, I wanted to talk a little bit about the Ombudsman of Ontario, André Marin. He lauded the improvements to our child care practices being taken in the Child and Family Services Statute Law Amendment Act. He talked about things like increasing the flexibility of dispositions to meet the needs of each child, making the system friendlier for adopting parents and the attempts to reduce the expense and acrimony of litigation by encouraging mediation.

Our government shares the Ombudsman's concern for the best interests of children within the child protection system. We agree with the Ombudsman that the clients of a children's aid society need to have an opportunity to bring concerns to a neutral third party. Children's aid societies must be accountable to the children and the families they serve. That's why we proposed the use of the Child and Family Services Review Board to replace the current director's reviews. Decisions under the CFSRB would be timely, neutral, binding and part of a province-wide complaints process based on best practices. The Ombudsman has authority over the CFSRB, making sure that the decisions made about our children and families are wise ones and are taken with care.

We need to have a system that meets the needs of the child, where the rules fit the child instead of the child

fitting the rules. I believe Bill 210, which is before the House now, is a much better bill than when it first arrived. It's stronger through the amendments the NDP and the government proposed. It's a stronger bill that will protect and provide accountability for all children in care. This is the right thing to do. We need to support this legislation. Our children cannot wait any longer. The clock is ticking. We need to protect children, and this is the bill that will do that.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. O'Toole: It's a distinct pleasure to have a few moments to reflect on a very important bill that was first introduced in June 2005 and has had public hearings. For the most part, I believe, we've listened to the member from Hamilton East, and I'd like to commend the work done in the committee by the member from York North, Julia Munro, our critic in this area. It is a very specialized area, and I would quite dismiss any of the insights I have. I attended on a couple of occasions to get some insight into it. I have familiarized myself with the bill. I've listened to some of the debate.

If you go through the explanatory notes of the legislation, you can see that there's quite a bit to it in terms of some of the areas of legislation it affects. What always triggers me to familiarize myself with a bill and what its implications are is to consult with my constituents and ask, "Have you heard of this bill?" whether it's Bill 206 or Bill 36; I've heard lots on those. Bill 210 is a more specialized bill, so I have put the word out, and I've listened to the wise advice from the member from York North.

It says, "The bill amends the Child and Family Services Act to permit courts to make custody orders for children in need of protection and openness orders for crown wards who are the subject of a plan for adoption. The bill makes additional amendments to the act and complementary amendments to the Children's Law Reform Act, the Education Act and the Vital Statistics Act."

Those don't sound that far off base, I suppose, but the general impression I got is that it's a well-intended bill. That's the impression I got listening to the minister speak in the House on it. The current minister, Minister Chambers, of course, would say that was the intent.

I looked at the notes Ms. Munro provided for us, and they say that the three key intentions of the bill are to provide permanency planning for children, openness in adoption and an alternative dispute resolution process. The government says its reforms will expand the range of permanent family-based core options for children in Ontario, enabling more children to move on to adoption. This would reduce court times and divert cases from the inappropriateness, in many occasions, of court. Those are well-intended, so I wouldn't fault that.

In our caucus discussions on this bill, I even questioned what was at risk, what were the things that we should be bringing to the debate to make sure we were addressing the issues of families and the stability of a child's current and future choices, and that someone is there watching out for their needs.

1710

The bill broadens the definition of "place of safety," allowing children removed from a home by the children's aid society to be placed—this is important—with family or community members instead of taken into care or kinship care. That's very important. The case that comes to mind is the Jeffrey Baldwin case, which was before the courts. The children's aid, for some reason or another, had assigned the young boy, Jeffrey Baldwin, to a kinship relationship. The family's situation had failed the child, I guess, and the child was taken and placed with, I believe, his grandparents.

I started to become a bit suspicious, just following the court proceedings, not any other decisions. As the reports were in the media, I noticed that one of the grandparents apparently had a prior charge or conviction, I think, on child abuse, or at least there was some suggestion that there was some abuse. I thought, even though it's a grandparent, how appropriate is it to assign a vulnerable child to someone who has had a prior conviction of any sort, for that matter?

I've heard many of those cases being raised as well in aboriginal children's issues that Ms. Horwath spoke about. I think there has to be a process to make sure that any potential risk to the child can be avoided absolutely. That is the government's role at the end of the day. No one would disagree with the expeditious movement of adoption in today's world, where many well-intended young couples, middle-aged couples and couples of all sorts are going to other countries to adopt children when we have children right here at home who want the stability and the care, the love and attention that a family setting can bring to their lives. It can be transformative.

So I want to be on the record as completely supportive, when all the safeguards are in place. That's the condition that is raised by the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman says here that they have no particular role in investigating and oversight of children's aid societies. At this point, I guess my comments are somewhat controversial; I think the member from Hamilton East as well was making the point that there should be completely impartial, independent oversight when necessary, as the Ombudsman does in other areas. I say for the record that I would be personally supportive of that, because at the end of the day the fragility and the emotional situation you're in in a children's aid intervention—there must have been justification for that investigation being assigned to someone.

We've seen, in the inquest into the Jeffrey Baldwin case, that mistakes are made—not intentionally, I'm sure. If somebody doesn't disclose, how does the caseworker or case manager know these things? But if you looked at it, there was no one, and the Ombudsman is saying it didn't seem to him that the CAS, whichever branch of the CAS it was, had an independent process to be self-critical. What better role for the Ombudsman to come in, whether it's a government agency or a public institution, where the Ombudsman has complete autonomy within the law to have an independent review? I don't see why they didn't do it. There are vested stakeholders within

any organization who may not want to deal with the answer or the inquiry in a completely open fashion. I think the Ombudsman—I had a casual look through the Ombudsman's report today—is doing a lot of great work in areas of property assessment and other things. Some might say he is doing too much work, but that's a whole debate for another time.

My concern here is about the children, and we do want that precaution.

I'm just going to put on the record here—this is from the Ombudsman's office, so it's not something from John Tory, our leader. We've discussed this in caucus. It's from the Ombudsman's office. It's dated February 14 and it says the following:

"The Ministry of Children and Youth Services' proposed amendments to Bill 210"—which we're discussing—"the Child and Family Services Statute Law Amendment Act, fall far short of what is needed to ensure independent, third party, investigative oversight of children's aid societies, according to Ontario's Ombudsman, André Marin.

"In a letter sent to the minister on Monday, the Ombudsman wrote: 'The ministry's proposal falls far short of what the citizens of Ontario, in particular, children in need of protection, deserve.'" That's the end of the quote. That's pretty strong language, but his intentions and his general thrust cannot be faulted here.

"Mr. Marin, who has called on the Legislature to extend Ombudsman oversight to children's aid societies, expressed concern and disappointment at the proposal which includes additional internal complaints mechanisms and expanding the mandate of the Child and Family Services Review Board."

I quote again here: "'It's a stop-gap measure, which does not go far enough,' said Mr. Marin. 'All it does is add another layer of bureaucracy to internal processes.'"

This sounds like a typical Liberal solution—I hate to be critical—have an inquiry and more bureaucracy; sort of like the LHINs, actually. I don't want to inflame this, because there are ministers here, but I don't see why they wouldn't take this precaution and agree with Ms. Horwath, the member from Hamilton East. I think it's a well-intended amendment.

This is where the politics are sometimes dysfunctional here. Ms. Horwath or Ms. Munro, in a very well-intended, non-partisan way, moved an amendment that does nothing to embellish our position on it. It strengthens the legislation. Premier McGuinty said he's going to "choose change" and "democratic renewal"—all these soft, fuzzy words. He doesn't listen.

This is starting to enrage me, because I sat here on Bill 206, and he wouldn't listen. They time-allocated. On Bill 36, the LHINs, they time-allocated. They ram this stuff through.

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): It's shocking.

Mr. O'Toole: It's shocking. Really, what's upsetting me—Speaker, you may have to slow me down here. Now they've time-allocated the Integrity Commissioner's report. That's when we're trying to get to the root cause

of how many cellphones Mr. Takhar had, who was using them where, did he report all of the phones, part of the phones, none of the phones, to Chalmers, not to Chalmers—do you understand?

What has it got to do with this? I would say that the Ombudsman, or the Integrity Commissioner in the case of Mr. Takhar, had it right.

Mr. Kormos: It could be a health issue.

Mr. O'Toole: Exactly.

In the very limited time left, I want to make sure that—it's frustrating. I've got to go back to Bill 210 for a moment, but this has struck me. Here again, Ms. Horwath moved an amendment, in my understanding, supporting what the Ombudsman said in the report that I've read here. It says that it completely fails. It does not go far enough to protect children, he said. It's about protecting children. It's not partisan.

What's this democratic renewal debate all about? Working together. Our leader, John Tory, is always advocating to extend the olive branch, to just go that extra step to try and reach consensus. He tried that on Bill 206. You'll probably recall that. He tried to say, "Let's have some more hearings with Sid Ryan. Let's try to find some common ground here." It was the same thing with Bill 210. We just tried to get this perfect. In fact, we tried to get it right. We had nothing to gain on that, except that the people of Ontario do have it to gain, and in this case, the children of Ontario have it to gain.

Mr. Parsons has done a lot of great work in this particular area. I want to put that on the record. I respect him for that. I would say that the member from Prince Edward-Hastings is well-known for the work he's done. He's received awards and recognition for his role in working with the CAS and with children, and I commend him for that. I'm surprised that he wouldn't stand up and insist, "Let's take every single precaution, listen to the Ombudsman, and have that final check and balance so that this Jeffrey Baldwin situation can't occur again."

You know yourself; you're closer to it than I am. There are those remote occasions where these little errors happen, and they shouldn't be. The Ombudsman's willing to embrace this, the protection of children, by having an independent review of the CAS. These are well-intended boards, for the most part; 99% is a pretty good mark. But that 1% just isn't acceptable, and the Ombudsman says that; I say that; Andrea Horwath says that; I believe Julia Munro says that, and yet they wouldn't agree with that small, non-partisan amendment. I wonder why.

It gets me back to saying right now that, given this reluctance to engage in the full meaning of democratic renewal, and to time-allocate the sensitive issues on Bill 206, Bill 36—even the Integrity Commissioner's report has been time-allocated—it's shutting down the very meaning of democracy. I'd say that in the last couple of weeks, about 75% of their legislative initiatives have been time-allocated—this hasty session.

With that in mind, for the most part, I accept and support Bill 210, under the good advice of our member

from York North, Julia Munro, and the hard work she's done, but I am now going to move adjournment of the debate in protest of the decision to time-allocate the Takhar decision. So I now move adjournment of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1722 to 1752.

The Deputy Speaker: Members, please take your seats.

Mr. O'Toole has moved adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour, please stand. Take your seats.

All those opposed, please stand.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 6; the nays are 47.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

Mr. O'Toole, you have the floor.

Mr. O'Toole: I'm somewhat shocked and humbled by the recent defeat. It's not something I'd like to get used to. I think the point I was trying to make was a valuable point. The point was that the debate that we're all anxious to participate in has been terminated. If you look at the number of time allocation motions—that's why I got to the point of frustration and moved that adjournment of the debate.

I think it's important to refocus here on what we were in the midst of debating, Bill 210, which is the Child and Family Services Statute Law Amendment Act. I was lauding or applauding the work done by the member from York North, our critic Julia Munro. She brought to my attention some very startling facts that I think are worthy of further comment.

The CASs serve about 9,000 children in permanent care and in foster homes, who must completely sever all ties to his or her birth family before being eligible for adoption—that's quite surprising—and 70% of children in permanent care can't be adopted because their birth family has a court-ordered right to contact them. So it's a very technical piece of legislation.

Then you look at the plight of the children's aid societies themselves. If you look at the children's aid societies, they're currently running a cumulative deficit of \$70 million. Their boards are cash-flow to keep their employees' salaries in place for child protection in our province. The bill does not address this problem at all. That's been a growing and pressing problem of children's aid.

If they wanted to do the right thing, they would have listened to the recommendations of the Ombudsman. I've

cited his remarks made on February 14: "'It's a stopgap measure, which does not go far enough,' said Mr. Marin. 'All it does is add another layer of bureaucracy to internal processes.'"

I think those are the points we're making. The member from Hamilton East, from the NDP, in committee made a very valid amendment, which was declined by the government. The government has always pleaded the case of, "Choose change; choose democratic renewal; we're different; we'll listen," but here we've got a bill, Bill 210, where everybody agreed that the Ombudsman should have some role to protect children. We also have the situation where we've got a couple of bills before us—Bill 206 has been time-allocated; Bill 36 has been time-allocated; time-allocating the Integrity Commissioner's report.

I'm just trying to find a point of balance, not just in this debate but in the actual proceedings in this Legislature. On behalf of John Tory, I think we've tried to respectfully make that argument. I think I've passed comments with respect to the member from Prince Edward-Hastings on the great work he's done. The very positive initiative of Bill 210 was to provide permanency for planning for children, openness in adoption and an alternative dispute resolution process. We support that; those are laudable objectives which we support. We'd like to work with you, and yet at the same time you're resistant to a very friendly amendment.

I don't know. I really don't believe it's the minister. I really believe, quite honestly, it's that they're afraid to allow the Ombudsman to have this independent, professional oversight of a kind of inside baseball game. That's my impression, and that would be something I'd have to be briefed on. That's why we need to have more debate on this. That's what it comes down to: It was in committee, it was brought up, it was voted down, and now I'm left pondering why it was turned down.

It's something we'll certainly have to look up in Hansard, and make sure the 9,000 children in the protection services of the children's aid have that final assurance that their safety always takes precedence. That's really why I'm speaking on this bill in the remaining one second I have left. We would like to support that. With that being said, I appreciate those listening to my remarks.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments? The member for Prince Edward-Hastings.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: I gave him the opportunity, and it is 6 o'clock. This House is adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1759.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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No. 46B

N° 46B

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 1 March 2006

Mercredi 1^{er} mars 2006

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Honourable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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L'honorable Michael A. Brown

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 1 March 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 1^{er} mars 2006

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to government order 9, when government order 9 is next called, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the motion without further debate or amendment; and

That there shall be no deferral of any vote allowed pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That, in the case of any division, the members shall be called in once, all divisions taken in succession, and the division bell shall be limited to 10 minutes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Caplan?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I'm done.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Simcoe-Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I rise on a sad note tonight. I note that this is about the 10th time that the Liberal government has used time allocation to shut us down in debate. This one is particularly upsetting and quite personal, actually, in terms of the fact that I was the first cabinet minister under the Mike Harris government, back on December 9, 1996, to do the right thing and step aside when there was a question of impropriety by one of my staff.

I'll briefly tell the story. It was a Friday afternoon. Jane Coutts of the Globe and Mail, who reported here in those days, had been pursuing a staff member of mine in terms of trying to get some OHIP information. We were in OHIP discussions with Ontario's doctors in 1996 at that time. They were the first major discussions that had occurred in about a decade in this province. My staffer unfortunately said that he knew or knew of the top biller in the province of Ontario—it turned out it was a cardiologist in Peterborough—and that his billings were so high that he couldn't possibly be spending any more than about a minute with each patient.

So the next day, on the Saturday, Jane Coutts wrote in the Globe and Mail. She did phone us on the Friday afternoon and indicated that she was going to write this story and what her comment was. My comment was, "I

don't know anything about this; I certainly don't have access to OHIP information." By the way, every other province and territory at that time in Canada disclosed doctors' incomes, but we didn't do that and don't do that. The minister would never get identifiable OHIP information; it was always blacked out.

Margaret Mottershead, a woman without a blemish on her record of some 35 years here in the public service, was the deputy minister. Mary Catherine Lindberg, with some 36 years here, was the assistant deputy minister in charge of that information, in charge of OHIP—impeccable, as well as the other assistant deputy ministers, directors and managers in that workforce.

At the end of the day, no one believed me. I phoned the Premier on the weekend and said, "I'll step down on Monday." I read the following statement into the record at 1:30 before question period and asked for unanimous consent. I fired Brett James, the staffer, at 2 o'clock on the previous Friday when the incident occurred—all of this over what turned out to be absolutely nothing compared to the Takhar affair.

The statement I read at that time was:

"I rise today on a point of personal privilege. Last week I was informed that a member of my staff had inappropriately disclosed information relating to a member of the medical profession to a member of the media. Upon learning of this allegation, I requested the resignation of the staff member and it was provided immediately.

"This morning, the secretary of cabinet formally called upon the Information and Privacy Commissioner to investigate this matter and report back as soon as possible. Mr. Speaker, I support this move.

"It is critical that the confidentiality of information in the Ministry of Health regarding any individual be maintained and protected. This is of the utmost importance to me personally, the ministry and this government. Therefore, to ensure the integrity of the investigation by the privacy commissioner, I believe it is both honourable and appropriate that I step aside as Minister of Health until the investigation into this matter is complete."

1850

Interjection: That's how it's done.

Mr. Wilson: That's how it should be done.

If you do the honourable thing, I say to Mr. Takhar, you get stories like this two days later in the Globe and Mail:

"Ontario Health Minister Jim Wilson resigned on Monday because a now former aide released confidential billing information to a Globe and Mail reporter. Every

boss has asked herself or himself, 'Am I responsible for the stupid mistakes made by people working for me?'

"Over the weekend Mr. Wilson answered that question honourably with his resignation. Specifically, he stepped down as minister until an investigation by Information and Privacy Commissioner Thomas Wright clears him of any personal wrongdoing.

"Mr. Wilson did the right thing. First, he held himself to the standard of accountability the public expects from elected officials, but doesn't always get. Recent history holds too many examples of ministers clinging to office despite breaking the public's trust: Sheila Copps, Shelley Martel, Bill Vander Zalm. Depressing, really."

This article was in the *Globe and Mail*.

"Second, he made the people's business his top priority"—referring to me. "His aide's attempt to smear Dr. William Hughes, head of the Ontario Specialists Coalition, poisoned already delayed negotiations on doctors' fees and billing rights. Ontario Medical Association negotiators demanded to know, 'Did the minister authorize "dirty tricks" against them?'"

Anyway, it goes on pleading actually with the privacy commissioner to do a fairly quick review of this matter.

In hindsight, compared to Mr. Takhar, who has been found guilty by the Integrity Commissioner—it's the first time in the history of Ontario—and his behaviour was found to be "egregiously reckless." From a judge, you don't get much stronger words. It's one of the only laws I can think of in Ontario, the Members Integrity Act, where the person who has to dish out the penalty is the Premier. It's one of the only laws where he is the person who doles out punishment, if any. In this case, he's totally decided, in spite of many quotes, which I'm going to go through, in spite of his minister being found guilty, being found reckless of the act, breaking the law, he absolutely refuses, for even a few days, to ask Mr. Takhar to step into the penalty box, pay the price, clear the air—best to have a committee clear the air—and get to the bottom of this so that we can once again restore confidence in the democratic system.

I did it. Bob Runciman did it. Al Leach did it. You hounded Chris Stockwell. You ruined his life. Sandra Pupatello and the late Dominic Agostino ruined Chris Stockwell's life.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Mr. Jackson.

Mr. Wilson: And Mr. Jackson—all exonerated. Chris shouldn't have had OPG or Hydro One, whoever it was, pay his van bills. It's because you're so bloody cheap in this place—and we've done it to ourselves over the years—that no one will pay your transportation when you're required to go to England and Europe and see what's going on in their electricity system. That doesn't happen in the Speaker's office, because you're not FOI-able and you can get away with this stuff. The fact of the matter is this guy got a ride with Hydro, which is quite common, and he got hounded and hounded until it ruined his life and drove him out of this place. He couldn't run

again—a man who had served the public all of his adult life in the city of Etobicoke and in this place.

Even after I do the right thing—I only have a few minutes or a couple of more minutes—what does Dalton McGuinty do, the classy guy he is, at question period at 1:30? I had already resigned, done the right thing, was willing to sit in the penalty box even though I felt personally I had done nothing wrong. I had been an assistant to Perrin Beatty for three years, one of the greatest men of integrity in Canadian history, and George McCague for six years prior to that in this place. He was Chairman of Management Board and chairman of cabinet for 10, 11 years under Bill Davis—I held both positions simultaneously—and a man of integrity. So we did the right thing.

But what does McGuinty do? I'll tell you his first question, December 9: "My question is for the Deputy Premier. This resignation can hardly be the end of the story. What we have here was that late last week we had the disclosure of highly confidential information from a senior staffer who worked with this minister day in and day out, and in a deliberate effort to undermine the credibility of and to intimidate a representative of the physicians who had been negotiating with this government, that information was disclosed. This is hardly the end of the matter."

He goes on to say, "There are some other questions that need to be answered: How did that confidential information get into the minister's office? Why was it brought into the office? Who else knew about it? What other files were in the hands of the minister, and why did Brett James disclose that information?"

"My question: Minister, given the seriousness of the situation"—he's addressing his question to the Deputy Premier of the day—"will you agree here and now for an all-party legislative committee to get to the bottom of this matter?" That's what he called for.

He did it again later on, in the next question: "There are many, many more questions that we feel ought to be answered, and for that reason once again I'm asking that you allow this House, through an all-party legislative committee, to subpoena witnesses and have them answer questions under oath." And then everybody gets in on the act. You've got Gerry Phillips, Sandra Pupatello, Mr. McGuinty again: "The Information and Privacy Commissioner will go only a short distance by way of asking the questions that we feel ought to be answered by a legislative committee. Once again, will you agree to have this House, through an all-party legislative committee, look at those questions?"

What was alleged to have happened was nothing. My uncle, Dr. J. K. Wilson, was head of cardiology at St. Mike's for many years. I phoned him and he said, "Everybody knows that this guy is the highest biller in the province. He goes around bragging about it." It was a terrible time. It was a terribly lonely time. Here you are, a minister, in the middle of negotiations, and you have to step aside; fine. But it took Tom Wright—whom we hadn't appointed, by the way—10 weeks, 10 weeks of my life, to find out what I told him on day one: "There's

nothing to this. We don't have access to OHIP information. The computer is in Kingston." We didn't have e-mail in those days, the way you have it today, so we wouldn't even be able to get it electronically.

The fact of the matter is, he was told immediately, on day one, by these people who had worked in the bureaucracy, who weren't necessarily Conservatives or anything. They were good people. They'd worked for all three stripes of government. My deputy minister and assistant deputy ministers and the whole slew of them came to my defence from day one and said, "There's nothing here. We don't have this information lying around on our floors." In fact, I never even visited the computer in Kingston. I never had time to go out to Kingston, which is the usual tour for health ministers, to go see this massive installation there.

It's a tough time. After I leave the House at 1:30, I go back to my office to get my personal belongings, and I'm not allowed to get my personal belongings. There's police tape across my door in Hepburn Block. The deputy, with tears in her eyes, asked for my keys. They asked for the car keys and the office keys. So it's a tough time.

Thank God for my riding. I had the Christmas party a few days later, on December 12—or the following Saturday, I guess, December 15 or so—at my house. I normally get about 250 people at this drop-in at my house that I have been having every year for 15 years now; I got close to 400 people. That's how good people are back in Simcoe–Grey. Actually, I got all kinds of gifts. I probably was in more trouble with the gifts that I was getting than with the whole issue, because people were giving me expensive bottles of Scotch because they felt terrible.

My point is that you have no integrity. You said one thing when you were on this side of the House; you do something else when you're on the government side. You said something else on this side of the House; you do something else there. Your integrity is terrible. The Premier says one thing, does another. You ruin five or six lives over here, and you don't even care, and now you're shutting down debate.

You know, Liberals don't have hearts. Mike Harris used to say that they'll slit your throat while they're smiling at you, and he's right. That's a horrible, horrible thing you're doing. You won't take responsibility. You're destroying parliamentary democracy. Previous to many of you arriving here—so I don't blame you—your colleagues, the rat pack, destroyed a lot of lives, and they have the gall today to not do the right thing.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Marchese: It's a pleasure to speak to this issue again. We're dealing with time allocation on the issue of the Integrity Commissioner's report. I first of all want to talk about time allocation, then talk about the report of the Office of the Integrity Commissioner, then attack what the minister did and ought not to have done, and then I will attack what the Premier should do and did not do.

On the first point, time allocation: It gets tiring in this place when you see opposition parties—all of us are victims of it, and we've all done it, but the Liberals were particularly adamant when they were in opposition. On every occasion when there was an opportunity to do so, they would attack the Conservative government, for good reasons, on every issue connected to time allocation. The former Conservative government had a predilection for calling time allocation motions. On each and every issue, there was time allocation. There was a penchant to do it. They had so much to do that they needed to cut debate short, and they loved to cut the debate so they could simply get on with the agenda of government in a businesslike way and just move on with all the other issues they had to deal with.

1900

The Liberals quite correctly attacked the Tories, as did New Democrats, because usually when you call time allocation, you've got something to hide or you want to hide something connected to a particular bill. In relation to this particular issue, the government wants to get out of the way as quickly as they can; they want to not deal with this issue any longer. In their mind, they have been attacked long enough and they simply want the issue to disappear.

I welcome the citizens of Ontario to this political forum. We are on live at 7 o'clock. It's good that you're watching this program, because there's a lot to learn. You learn so much from all of the debaters, the Tories, the NDPers, and the Liberals when they speak, because from time to time they speak to these issues as well, and we're looking forward to their participation tonight.

But I've got to tell you that it is actually pointless to talk about how many time allocation motions were introduced by the Conservatives. It's ridiculous for the Liberal government to say, "We've only introduced 10 motions of time allocation, whereas the Tories, oh, my God, they've introduced 50, 60, 70." Do you see the game? "They did more than we did, and because we've done fewer than they did, therefore we're better than they are." It's a silly argument. It's a useless argument to be making. How can the Liberals be any better than the Tories simply because they've introduced fewer time allocation motions than they did? But they do it. If not with the same regularity, they do it when it suits them to do it, because they want this issue to disappear, for a variety reasons, the least of which includes the fact that we have a by-election in the eastern part of this boundary, and they want this issue to go away. They don't want this to become an issue as the by-election in the riding of Broadview is taking place. So I have to say to the government, please stop your attack on the previous government on the basis that they introduced time allocations more than you did, on that issue.

Moving on to what Monsieur McGuinty used to say in relation to other conflicts of interest or at least conflict as it related to the contravention of the Integrity Commission, the member from Simcoe–Grey pointed out his own experience and talked about how he resigned as the

right thing to have done when there was a whiff of a possible contravention or a scandal.

McGuinty, the Premier now, then Leader of the Opposition, wasted no effort in attacking Monsieur Leach when he was in government. There are so many quotes. I'll just try to select a couple in relation to what he had to say about Monsieur Leach. Let's come back to what this report is all about, what the conclusion is all about. It's about your minister being in breach of the act; it's about, now that we understand the full implications of this, two other ministers clearly being in breach of the act. You have no option, Premier. You cannot wriggle out from under this one. You have been hoisted on your own petard. This is an arm's-length, quasi-judicial body. You've got to ask for and demand the resignation of your three ministers.

June 25, 1997: Monsieur Leach and others, obviously. "What today is all about is your standards. It's lending focus on those more so than at any time in the history of your government. You, today, are under the microscope"—referring to Monsieur Harris—"and people in this province want to know what you are going to do in the face of a finding by the Integrity Commissioner that your minister broke the law, is in breach of the Members' Integrity Act, interfered with the workings of an independent, arm's-length, quasi-judicial body." That was June 25, 1997.

Monsieur McGuinty was also very self-righteous when Chris Stockwell was caught expensing meals and travel to his riding association but had nothing to say when Monsieur Cordiano was caught doing exactly the same thing.

On Monsieur Cordiano, McGuinty says the following: "First of all, let me say once again that I fully support Minister Cordiano. He has been faithful and diligent in making each and every one of his expenses public in the required way. All of his government expenses have been vetted by the Integrity Commissioner and approved by the Integrity Commissioner. All of his party expenses have been signed off by an independent third party auditor."

In relation to Mr. Stockwell, this is what he said:

"It is wrong to run some \$25,000 in family expenses through the riding association. To my way of thinking, Premier, you should have fired Chris Stockwell, because what he did was wrong.

"It's about ... your judgment and your standards. At what point in time are you, as Premier, going to exercise some leadership, at least some modicum of leadership, and tell your caucus and cabinet ministers that in your government, there are some things that are right and there are some things that are wrong, and what Chris Stockwell did was wrong? When are you going to have the courage, the intestinal fortitude, the conviction to stand up and condemn this minister for what he did as wrong?"

Mr. McGuinty was also scathing in his attacks on Cam Jackson, who was caught expensing pricey meals and hotel stays to the public, whether it was right or wrong, but when Dwight Duncan was caught doing the same

thing, his story changed. On Cam Jackson, he said the following:

"There's the matter of Cam Jackson running up expense tabs....

"I wonder if you are taking notice that your ministers are apologizing ex post facto for behaviour that should never have arisen in the first place. The reason that is happening is because of your lack of standards, your lack of leadership, the lack of direction you are setting for your government."

On Monsieur Duncan, this is what the Premier says: "I think the important thing here is that the Integrity Commissioner is charged with the special responsibility of reviewing expenses submitted. Those have been submitted and they have been approved."

You dear listeners and watchers of this political forum hopefully got a good sense of what it means to be in opposition and attack those who have been in conflict or even possible conflict with the standards of the Integrity Commissioner's act, and what happens when you become a Premier. You notice very quickly that the Premier changes his tune, the song, defends his members and says, "There is no problemo. Everything is okay." But when he's in opposition and there is even the whiff of a possible scandal, the then Leader of the Opposition, Monsieur McGuinty, had no problem saying, "They should resign, and it's up to the Premier to be able to stand up to his own standards and fire the offending members." Once in government, everything changes. It makes us all cynical, politicians and the electorate alike, to hear one song in opposition and a different song when you're in government.

What happened here with the issue of the Honourable Harinder Takhar, as reported by the Office of the Integrity Commissioner, was that the minister, who had a share interest in Chalmers Group, had to put his shares in the "management trust of which Joseph Jeyanayangam, Chalmers' CFO, is trustee. Mr. Jeyanayangam was also the elected treasurer of the minister's riding association as of December 17."

1910

We believe, as the Integrity Commissioner reports, that a lot of these issues as they relate, first of all, to why the minister went to Chalmers Group and, secondly, why the trustee of his own interests happened to be the elected treasurer of the minister's riding association, why those two particular issues produced a conflict for which Monsieur Harinder Takhar should have resigned and should resign, but refuses to do so.

On page 9 of the Office of the Integrity Commissioner report: "The evidence ... discloses that the minister attended the Chalmers office on December 17, 2004 for the annual general meeting of his riding association and that Mr. Jeyanayangam was elected treasurer of the riding association at that meeting. Finally," we understand, "there is undisputed evidence that Chalmers provided a parking place at its offices for the minister. The parking place was signed 'H.T.' It was adjacent to Mrs. Takhar's parking place signed 'B.T.'"

We also know, from page 8, that “On April 29, 2005 Brett Kelly, director of research, PC services, on his way to work at Queen’s Park from his Dunnville home, drove to the offices of the Chalmers Group of Companies at 6400 Northam Drive in Mississauga, Ontario.” He arrived at the meeting at 7:30. We know that Mr. Takhar parked in the lot near the Chalmers offices. All this we know to be fact.

What we read in the preamble to the act is the following: “Members are expected to perform their duties of office and arrange their private affairs in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity of each member, maintains the assembly’s dignity and justifies the respect in which society holds the assembly and its members.”

It says as well, “Members are expected to act with integrity and impartiality that will bear the closest scrutiny.”

I believe and we believe, as opposition members, that the act has been violated by Mr. Takhar, the Minister of Transportation, and I will go on to show, based on the evidence provided by the Integrity Commissioner, that he has violated the act.

On page 10 of the integrity report: “In his response to the substance of the allegations the minister asserted that in the spring of 2005 he and his wife faced the prospect of paying for their younger daughter’s university education starting in September 2005. The minister stated that because of difficulties in arranging a time for discussion about university-related matters he and his wife decided to meet at Chalmers on a workday when both of them were free. As to Mr. Jeyanayangam’s attendance at the meeting, through his counsel the minister stated:

“It was also decided, at the time that the meeting was being set up, that”—I’m having difficulty—“Mr. Jeyanayangam ... would be asked to attend, since he was in control of the assets from which the education would be paid for.”

We find it problematic that the minister could not find the time to discuss the issue of their daughter’s education in Scotland and/or England—we don’t know which of these two; I don’t know which of the two. But I find it very problematic and difficult that the minister could not find a half-hour of his time, and he and his wife could not find a half-hour of their time together, to discuss the matter of the education of their daughter, at home or at a cafe or at a restaurant or anywhere but the Chalmers Group. It is inconceivable to me or anyone watching that the minister could not find the time to meet except at the Chalmers Group.

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): How do you know?

Mr. Marchese: My friend Mr. Racco from Thornhill says, “How do you know?” Well, I am assuming, Monsieur Racco, member from Thornhill, that you can find a half-hour of your time to spend with your wife, and if you are not finding a half-hour of your time or an hour of your time, you are in deep trouble, socially and psychologically, and I dare venture you’re having a diffi-

cult time in that marriage holding it together. Because I say that you do find the time to be with your wife, as I do with mine, and it may never be enough time, but we do find the time to discuss important things with our partners and/or our wives or husbands. We find the time if we deem it important. For the minister to say, “We could only find time to meet at work,” is incomprehensible, unacceptable, and not believable by me, the Tories, and/or, I dare venture, half of the Liberal caucus, if not three-quarters of the Liberal caucus, because they’re reasonably minded people too. And they have wives—those who are men—and those who are women have partners and/or husbands, and they know, surely, that if you’re going to discuss something serious, you’re going to find the time—at home or over a latte, espresso, cappuccino, tea, if that’s what you drink, but you will find the time.

So I’m sorry, the argument that you couldn’t find the time is a problemo. It doesn’t hold. It doesn’t hold with me, it doesn’t hold with Mr. Kormos—he’s here—or anybody, for that matter.

On page 4 of this document we know that “the minister acknowledged that the annual general meeting of his riding association was held at the Chalmers offices on December 17, 2004, and that he had attended that meeting.” Most Liberal members who are reasonably minded people, which I believe they are, are probably saying, “What would drive the minister to have gone to a meeting at the Chalmers Group related to his riding association, as opposed to convincing Mr. Joseph Jeyanayangam and others that perhaps the annual general meeting of the riding association should be held outside of the Chalmers Group?” Why didn’t the 14 staff members of the minister advise him, “Minister, this is problematico. You cannot go there. You ought not to go there. There is an appearance of a conflict. You shouldn’t do it”? I would fire, first of all, the 14 staff. That’s what I would do, having had some experience in this place—14 at least, and those who were not in the know, maybe they’d get dispensation. But most of them should go, because the minister may not have the time, God bless, to read everything he needs to read or she needs to read, but surely the political staff or some of the political staff—and those who have been ministers know that you’ve got a lot of advisers, and if not one person advised you that you shouldn’t have gone, it’s a problem.

Speaker, you agree with me. I’m sure you agree with me, because it’s a reasonable-minded thing. I don’t know where you have your annual general meetings, but I’m sure it wouldn’t be in the company where you worked. I’m convinced of it. You, as an accountant, wouldn’t go back to the accountability office you might have had. It would seem odd. Besides, they might not want you to go back there; I don’t know. But it would seem very odd.

Interjection: That’s another issue.

Mr. Marchese: You would have it somewhere else? That’s a problemo, and I say to you that the 14 people who worked for the minister have got to help him out. I’m sure Mr. Bradley agrees with me on this.

On page 14 of the report, we know that, "The minister's riding association uses the Chalmers Group offices as its official address." That's the same thing, so we don't need to repeat that particular fact.

Moving on, on page—where are we? We know that Mr. Siegel, the defence lawyer for the minister, argued that the allegations made against Mr. Takhar were frivolous and ought to be thrown out simply because they're not substantiated, presumably, or they're simply not substantive enough to hold up in court. So he argued—Mr. Siegel—that the motion was frivolous and it should be dismissed in a quick manner. It's amazing to me that, if somebody complains about the fact that he had two meetings, and the man with whom his shares are placed in trust is also the riding association treasurer, those allegations would be considered frivolous by the minister's defence lawyer.

Mercifully, the Integrity Commissioner says, "I see absolutely no basis upon which to accede to Mr. Siegel's submissions that the complaint be dismissed as frivolous and vexatious or not made in good faith. The allegations made as related to ss. 10 and 11 of the act require an answer or an explanation. This complaint," he says, "is manifestly not frivolous and vexatious or made in bad faith." The commissioner uses the word "manifestly." Notice that there is a great deal of weight that is put to the language that is used by the Integrity Commissioner, and in this case, "manifestly not ... vexatious." Not just simply not vexatious, but manifestly so.

So we had a weak argument presented by Monsieur Siegel that it should have been dismissed summarily as being vexatious. I suggest that that didn't go too far.

1920

I move on to the report on page 27. We're coming near the end of it, at least in terms of my remarks, I hope, assuming our leader is around to complete the remarks. Otherwise, I will fill in much more.

The commissioner says: "As I have said, Mr. Jeyanayagam produced notes that he said he took during the course of the April 29 meeting. I have annexed a typed version of Mr. Jeyanayagam's notes and a handwritten version as appendix 'A' to this report. I am skeptical as to the legitimacy of these notes." Take heed, my Liberal friends. He says he is "skeptical as to the legitimacy of these notes." "Perhaps my skepticism is in part caused by my concern as to why this meeting at Chalmers was held in the first place and why Mr. Jeyanayagam was invited to participate."

Further down the page he says:

"Notwithstanding my skepticism about Mr. Jeyanayagam's notes, having regard to the standard of proof—clear and convincing evidence—I am not satisfied that the evidence establishes that the minister was engaged in the management of a business carried on by a corporation."

Remember, Mr. McGuinty cites this as evidence that he did nothing wrong, but Monsieur McGuinty doesn't go on to say what the commissioner says. Remember, Monsieur McGuinty says the opposition uses passages

selectively and makes the assertion, therefore, that he does something differently, i.e., he provides both sides of the story. What Monsieur McGuinty doesn't do is to say this: "There is, however, no doubt that the Minister was egregiously reckless in participating in the April 29 meeting at Chalmers. He virtually invited a complaint by his conduct."

Monsieur McGuinty, mon ami, and the others never raised this part of the commissioner's report. I quoted what the commissioner said that McGuinty quotes, but I quote as well that the commissioner says the minister was "egregiously reckless." Note the use of those words. When I use the word "egregious" in this assembly, I use it to make a point—an emphatic point. It doesn't say, "It's bad—really bad." When you use the word, "egregious," you manifestly add so many adjectives about how really, really bad it is. "Egregiously reckless" is strong language used by the commissioner. I say this as a non-lawyer, but we all understand that when we use language, it has weight, and it has weight when you use particular words, the weight of the words "was egregiously reckless in participating" at that meeting and he "invited a complaint by his conduct."

It goes on on page 28 of his report, which I have in front of me:

"Any inferences that I might draw from evidence that I accept must not be speculative. It seems to me that were I to conclude the minister engaged in the management of a business, particularly on April 29, I would be trespassing on the ground of speculation."

This is the line that Monsieur McGuinty, mon ami, quotes all of the time. What he doesn't quote is the following: "I can find no more than an error in judgment, that is negligence, on the minister's part. I therefore conclude this aspect of the complaint has not been established." But it is established that there was an error in judgment and there was serious negligence on his part, including egregiously reckless behaviour in participating in that meeting of April 29.

That, in my humble view, is sufficient to persuade the Premier that Monsieur Takhar, the Minister of Transportation, is in contravention of the integrity act, and for that reason, he should say sayonara to his position, move on and be lucky enough to be reinstituted in a couple of months. But he doesn't want to do it. The Premier doesn't want to do it. The Premier is afraid, presumably, that another political scandal would ensue should he resign, but what the Premier doesn't know is that by holding the minister in his place and in that position, it's equally scandalous and it flies against everything the Premier used to say when he was in opposition.

We are not judging Monsieur Takhar as much as we are judging the standards of Monsieur McGuinty, the Premier. We're judging him by the standard of which he was a fine example and which he articulated best as to why it was that the many Tory ministers should resign when he was Leader of the Opposition. That's what is at stake.

What the commissioner has done is to issue a reprimand. I believe, given that the commissioner has

limited ability to tell the Premier what to do, that that reprimand was sufficient reason for the Premier to say to Monsieur Takhar, "You've got to go." It surprises me that Monsieur Takhar is still here.

Again, this has nothing to do with the personality of Mr. Takhar. Yes, there was an error in judgment. We're not judging him as a person, but we are judging what he has done here in relation to going to the Chalmers Group; having a meeting there; having a parking spot there; having gone not just once but several times; having the treasurer of the riding association, who is the man who holds his assets in trust, be very closely linked to these meetings; and the taking of notes whose veracity the commissioner doubted. All of these things points to why Monsieur Takhar should leave. We're not judging him as a person; we're judging him in terms of his own political decisions and how it is that he, as a minister, ought to have known and ought to have avoided meetings at the Chalmers Group, and he did not do that. That is enough reason to dismiss him.

The reason that he had to meet with his spouse and the treasurer, who holds his assets in trust—that they should have met at Chalmers to discuss the issue of the education their daughter at Chalmers is simply unimaginable, to say the least. It's simply unacceptable to think that somehow they could not have found time to meet at home on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon to discuss a personal matter; that he endangered his political career by merely having the meeting with his wife and the treasurer at Chalmers Group.

I believe that the reason the Premier wants to terminate, to choke off, debate tonight on this issue is because he wants this issue to die as quickly as it can. The Premier has been embarrassed by this incident, particularly when reminded about what he had to say to the Tories when they were in power. He has been completely embarrassed by the incident. He wants the issue to go away. What he doesn't realize is that the issue hasn't gone away and will not go away because the proper thing to have done is for Mr. Takhar to have stepped down.

I believe that many Liberal members believe the same thing. I think that most of the Liberal members sitting in this House tonight and those who are not here tonight believe that this has caused them all serious embarrassment, and he should have done them all a favour by stepping aside. Surely they believe that the Premier should have done them the favour of not having to debate this issue day in and day out for the last week and a half. They would have been spared the ignominy of having to deal with this issue had the Premier done the right thing.

1930

The Liberal members who are in this place tonight can't say that; I understand that. They have to pretend that they are behind the Premier; they have to pretend that they are behind the minister, because that's what you've got to do. You're in solidarity with your party. But those of us who have been in government for so long, or even not so long, as some of the members in the Conservative Party or the Liberal Party know—even they

know this has caused serious embarrassment to their party. The issue will not go away even if this government has terminated the debate tonight with this motion to time-allocate the Integrity Commissioner's report.

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): I'm pleased to be able to speak to this motion this evening. The member for Trinity-Spadina made a number of assertions, as he always does, and I have to say that, regrettably, I don't agree with most of them this evening. I do agree with his discussion on the predilection of the previous government for invoking closure. I too spent some time here between 1997 and 1999, and I too witnessed first-hand how the previous government did ram things through this Legislature. We, of course, have used the motion that we're debating tonight sparingly, and we feel that in fact there has been full and frank debate of this motion that we are debating.

The Integrity Commissioner's report, which we are debating this evening, I should note does not deal with pricey meals or abuses of expenses or any personal benefit to a minister. It's not about misuse of taxpayers' dollars. The Integrity Commissioner in fact concluded in his report that the minister, Minister Takhar—

Interjection.

Ms. Smith: If the member would like to make a comment, he probably should sit in his seat.

I would note that the Integrity Commissioner concluded that "the minister did not go about intentionally trying to short-circuit the system." That's important: The Integrity Commissioner did find that the minister in this case "did not go about intentionally trying to short-circuit the system."

We take our responsibility to consider this report very seriously. That is why we have brought this matter before this House on three different occasions over the past three weeks, or, as the member for Trinity-Spadina said, why we've spoken about it day in and day out for weeks. We have had over seven hours of debate. I am the 27th member to stand in this House and speak to this issue.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): You're only the second Liberal.

Ms. Smith: In fact, no, I'm the ninth Liberal, but thank you—again, not sitting in your seat. The member from the opposition, I'm sure, would like to share in this debate.

As he well recognizes, there are currently several very important issues that this Legislature needs to address. We need to talk about clean drinking water, we need to talk about a stronger Toronto for a stronger Ontario, we need to talk about learning to 18, and I could go on. I would remind the members in opposition that we don't have the power to inquire further into the contravention or to impose a penalty other than the ones recommended. Our job as legislators is to approve or reject the report and its recommendations.

I'd like to take the Legislature through the Members' Integrity Act. In December 1994, Bill 209, An Act to revise the Members' Conflict of Interest Act and to make related amendments to the Legislative Assembly Act,

was passed and received royal assent. The Members' Integrity Act was proclaimed in October 1995. It deals not only with issues of conflict of interest in the economic sense, but also with Ontario's parliamentary conventions.

I would like to draw the members' attention to section 10, that once appointed to the executive council, the Members' Integrity Act points out that a member cannot "engage in employment or the practice of a profession ... engage in the management of a business carried on by a corporation; or ... hold an office or directorship," other than in a social club, religious organization or political party, except as permitted by the responsibilities of being a member of the executive council.

Section 11 has also been discussed by the Integrity Commissioner. Section 11 sets out that a member of the executive council cannot "hold or trade in securities, stocks, futures or commodities," with the exception of certain assets and liabilities set out in the act:

The member may entrust the assets to one or more trustees;

The trust agreement and the trustees are required to be approved by the commissioner;

The trustees must be at arm's length with the member and cannot consult with the member regarding the management of the trust property;

At intervals throughout the year and at the end of each calendar year, the trustee must give the member a written report stating the value, but not the nature, of the assets in the trust;

In addition, the trustee must give the member sufficient information to submit returns to Revenue Canada;

The trust must "provide that the member may ... instruct the trustees to liquidate all or part of the trust and pay over the proceeds to the member."

Those are the two sections of the act that were raised by a member in their referral question to the Integrity Commissioner.

I refer to section 30, where a member of the Legislative Assembly, by resolution, or the executive council may request the commissioner's opinion with respect to the compliance of a member with the act or Ontario parliamentary convention by setting out in writing the grounds for the belief that the member is in contravention and the nature of the member's contravention. That's what happened here.

To that end, the commissioner can then conduct an inquiry, which is set out in section 31. He may conduct an inquiry upon giving reasonable notice to the member concerned. Where the request for an opinion is received from a member or the Legislative Assembly, the commissioner's report is forwarded to the Speaker of the assembly, who presents the report to the assembly. When the request is received from the executive council, the commissioner reports his opinion to the clerk of the executive council.

As seems to be missed sometimes in this House, the Members' Integrity Act sets out penalties, and one penalty in particular we are discussing here today is part of

the report, but he does have the authority to issue other penalties. Under section 34, when the commissioner conducts an inquiry following a request from a member or the Legislative Assembly and finds that the member has contravened the act or has refused to follow a disclosure statement or a statement of material change within the time provided, or has failed to disclose relevant information in that statement or has contravened Ontario parliamentary convention, the commissioner shall recommend:

"(a) that no penalty be imposed;

"(b) that the member be reprimanded;

"(c) that the member's right to sit and vote in the assembly be suspended for a specified period or until a condition imposed by the commissioner is fulfilled; or

"(d) that the member's seat be declared vacant."

There are other penalties available.

In this particular case, Mr. Justice Osborne, who is the Integrity Commissioner and reviewed this situation, chose to issue a reprimand. In his report, which was released on January 4, 2006, the Integrity Commissioner looked at three very specific issues. He looked at whether Minister Takhar had, at any time, used his position or knowledge gained as a minister to further the interests of his family-owned business. The Integrity Commissioner said that there was "no merit." Again, I'd like to repeat this for the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, who may some day find his seat. There was no merit to the contention that the minister's family-owned business would have benefited from his position as minister. The Integrity Commissioner went on to say that "there was no evidence, direct or circumstantial," to support that claim.

The second point that the Integrity Commissioner was asked to review was whether Minister Takhar participated in the management of those companies after he was appointed minister. Here, the Integrity Commissioner clearly confirms that he has never used his position or knowledge gained from that position to further private interest. He was very clear.

The third point that the Integrity Commissioner was asked to review was the relationship with Minister Takhar's trustee and whether it was at arm's length. When Minister Takhar was appointed as a minister, he put all of his assets into a blind trust. The Integrity Commissioner approved the trustee, as set out in section 11 under the Members' Integrity Act. That was a requirement. Mr. Takhar failed to inform the Integrity Commissioner when the trustee of his blind trust also became the CFO of the Mississauga Centre riding association. He should have notified the commissioner of the change in the relationship with his trustee. This was the finding of the commissioner.

Minister Takhar has fully accepted the commissioner's findings and has worked closely with him over the past few months to ensure that a new trustee was put in place.

In his concluding remarks, the Integrity Commissioner wrote:

"Although I regard this as a serious matter, I have to recognize that the minister did not go about intentionally

trying to short-circuit the system. I accept his statement that had he realized that his arm's-length relationship ... was compromised, he would have taken steps through this office to straighten things up." That is what the Integrity Commissioner has found.

We have tasked the Integrity Commissioner, through the Members' Integrity Act, to look into situations like this. The Integrity Commissioner did so. We've asked him to write a report. He did such. Under section 34, he has the ability to impose penalties. He has chosen a reprimand, and that is what is recommended by this report. In accepting this report, the reprimand will have been given and the Legislature will have done its task and the Integrity Commissioner will have completed his task.

At no time was the public interest put at risk through the actions of the minister. There was no misuse of funds. There was no influencing of government decisions. This is about a minister who failed to inform the Integrity Commissioner that his trustee was elected the CFO of his riding association. The minister has learned a valuable lesson and has worked very closely to change the situation.

1940

As many in this House know, Minister Takhar was elected at the same time I was, in 2003. He brings to this Legislature a great deal of experience and personal integrity. He has done a fabulous job as the Minister of Transportation. I had the privilege of hosting him in my riding, in Nipissing, where we announced the northern highway strategy, which is a great initiative for the north, something long overdue, something long waited for. As many in this House have heard me speak eloquently on the topic of northern highways—

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): Always eloquently.

Ms. Smith: Always eloquently, and at some length, I might add. We in the north are delighted to see an end date—

Mr. Yakabuski: And from your own seat, no less.

Ms. Smith: Well, I only speak from my own seat, and sooner or later you will be reprimanded, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

The motion that is before this House today, before we get too far off-track, is "that the Legislative Assembly adopt the report of the Integrity Commissioner dated January 4, 2006, and approve the recommendation contained therein." I am pleased today to be in this House and to speak to the motion and to accept the report that the Integrity Commissioner has provided to us. We approve his recommendations. We recognize that the minister has made an error, has corrected that error, has said publicly that he made an error and that he was apologetic for that error. Nothing more can be done. Nothing more should be done. I appreciate the time today.

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): I'm disillusioned and I'm disappointed with our Premier's lack of action with respect to the reckless behaviour of his appointed Minister of Transportation.

Rather than choking off debate and compromising the integrity of this Legislature, I'm convinced that the Premier should be seeking his minister's resignation. I'm concerned that the members opposite are forced to sully their own reputations defending the transgressions of their colleague, defending the transgressions of their Premier. I assume that's why they're hiding from this debate.

It's not just about the members opposite, members who have to pay the price for this Premier's behaviour. Every member in this chamber gets taken down a notch with respect to public esteem, especially when a Premier tolerates a politician such as the Minister of Transportation getting caught visiting the cookie jar on company time. That's a price I'm not willing to pay, not for this Premier, not for this government. We simply must be willing to do whatever is necessary to rebuild Ontarians' faith in this Legislative Assembly, to rebuild faith in the institutions of this government and the elected representatives, all of us who are here for public service. It's not an issue of partisanship. It's an issue of integrity, it's an issue of honour and it's an issue of ethical behaviour.

Ever since I was elected in 1995, I have referred to myself as an elected representative or as an MPP. Down my way, being called a politician is usually an insult. Politics is a dirty word. I regret that. When I first read the Common Sense Revolution, I noticed that Mike Harris promised to eliminate 20% of the politicians. In our area, that was felt to be a good start. I don't blame the good folks down my way for holding politicians in such low regard. Who wouldn't be skeptical of politicians after seeing the Premier blithely ignore the Integrity Commissioner's report on Mr. Takhar?

Despite the bad reputation unscrupulous ministers give elected representatives, some of my boyhood heroes were politicians. I think of my grandfather, a just and upright man. He was a federal MP for our area, a farmer, a Protestant of southern Irish descent, a military man, a writer. He had the reputation of being a bit of a tough nut, and as I understand it, he had the reputation of being someone who did the right thing, who did the honourable thing. Two other politician heroes or role models for me, federal MPs in our area, were Evans Knowles and Bill Knowles, and provincially, of course, Jimmy Allan.

There's a plaque located behind the wall—in fact, it's strategically located in a position where government members see this bronze plaque every time they enter the Legislative Assembly. I'll read it in part. It's titled, "Robert Baldwin, 1804–1858.

"Born in Toronto, Baldwin devoted his entire career to a single cause. As a member of the assembly, as executive councillor, as Solicitor General, and as co-Premier he remained true to his vision until the second Baldwin-LaFontaine administration established the principle of responsible government in Canada."

I suggest that members take a close look at that plaque. Historica on-line provides many examples of Baldwin resigning—this was in the 1840s—a number of times rather than compromising his values or compro-

mising his character and ultimately his honour: "Baldwin commanded respect and exercised moral leadership by reason of his character. In a society that revered the code of gentlemen, he embodied the cherished virtues of adherence to honour, duty, and principle. Each time he gained office he left it by resignation rather than compromise his principles. In 1841, Baldwin resigned when the Governor refused to implement responsible government" at that time.

I'm talking about an honourable man resigning out of principle. This is over 160 years ago, well before the Members' Integrity Act, which I hear so much discussed today. This is history. Perhaps now honour is merely a footnote to history, but I can't help but wonder how Robert Baldwin would have reacted to a Premier condoning such a serious and offensive breach as we've seen with the Minister of Transportation.

In 1933, George Wilson, the author of *The Life of Robert Baldwin*, says this about Baldwin: "In the long roll of those who have played a part in the public life of Canada, there is no more honourable name than that of Robert Baldwin. Success as a politician was as nothing in his eyes compared to the fact that he should never do anything dishonourable or mean."

That book is in our legislative library. I just returned it today. It was signed out repeatedly back in the late 1930s. It was printed in 1933. Sadly, it hasn't been signed out since 1975. Does that suggest the length of time that honour has been in decline in this esteemed assembly? I'm glad Robert Baldwin was denied the opportunity to see how this chamber has been denigrated and diminished lately. I would be embarrassed for him to see how the honour, duty and principles that he stood for have declined on this government's watch.

Wilson went on to say, "He would never stoop for office or for power. Power might come to him, office might seek him out, but it would never be because he had compromised his conscience or done anything of which he himself might be ashamed."

Baldwin did not need an integrity act. I look back to the day when men like Robert Baldwin blessed Parliament—in this case, the Upper Canada of the 1840s. I see a beacon for all of us. A man of his stature, of his integrity, would never have been accused of "egregiously reckless" behaviour. If he had been, he would have resigned on the spot.

I would be very surprised to see such an accolade to Dalton McGuinty. Under this watch, this House, in my view, has been diminished; it has been undermined and tarnished. High position—no brass box for this Premier.

Has the Premier forgotten why we call this place Queen's Park? As we know, it's named after Queen Victoria. I had the distinct honour several weeks ago to attend the inaugural visit to Ontario of Her Excellency the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean. I wore my medals for the ceremony. I wore them with pride, knowing that there is a long history of honour and tradition in our parliamentary system of government. As MPPs, we have all sworn allegiance to the Queen and what she represents. This tradition must be upheld.

1950

I'd like to conclude with some advice for this Premier. In addition to Baldwin's code of honour, we are blessed with more wisdom on the topic much more recently through the Members' Integrity Act. My advice is that the Premier should read it aloud in caucus.

The present Premier I consider hypocritical. He is guilty of his own accusation—

The Deputy Speaker: I would like the member to consider withdrawing that.

Mr. Barrett: I will withdraw, Speaker.

I would ask those assembled to judge for themselves. I will present the evidence. In 2003, the present Premier, and I quote: "When barely half of the population takes the time to exercise their basic democratic right, when turnout among young people and new Canadians hardly hits one third, real change is needed. People have lost faith in their institutions and their institutions of government."

I suggest that we can see why. This Takhar mess, this scandal, is contributing to our democratic decline. This time allocation motion, coupled with last night's time allocation motion and this scandal of which we speak, is recklessly destroying democratic debate and the sense of honour and the sense of principle that should exist within this chamber. This is a price that I'm not willing to pay and in fact none of us should pay.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member of the official—of the third party.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): If you're in the business of elevating us today, Speaker, we'll accept.

I merely want to make a few comments on today's debate. My comments are, first of all, contextual. So that people at home understand, this is a time allocation motion. It's the third time the McGuinty government has used a time allocation motion to shut down debate in a week. We had the OMERS pension legislation. The government time-allocated that. Then we have the issue of the Integrity Commissioner. The government has time-allocated that. Then we had the LHINs legislation. The government has time-allocated that.

For people at home, what "time allocation" means is that a majority government simply shuts down debate, shuts down discussion and says, "We're not interested in hearing anything from anybody anymore. We, as the government, are going to use our majority to ram this down people's throats." That's what it means.

I find it interesting to actually read some of the comments of the now members of the McGuinty government on what they thought about time allocation.

Let's take the former McGuinty House leader, now Minister of Finance, Mr. Duncan. This is what he had to say: "Closure motions really are inherently bad for our parliamentary system and prevent members of all political parties—government members, opposition members, third party members—from fully participating in the debates of the day. They're designed to limit those discussions."

Again from Mr. Duncan, former government House leader, now Minister of Finance: "If you're truly interested in democracy, as you say you are, if that is where you're going, I suggest to you that you don't use the great mallet of closure to stifle this Legislature and to prevent public input into this bill. If you're all about democracy, you ought not to be afraid of that."

Then I want to quote the current government House leader, because he after all presented this guillotine motion, this motion to absolutely wipe out democratic debate on this issue. He said, "Each of the time allocation motions which close off or choke off debate in this House seems to be more drastic as it comes forward, seems to be more sinister as it relates to the privileges of members of this House and as it relates to healthy, democratic debate for the people of this province." This is the House leader who has presented three guillotine motions in less than a week.

I want to quote him again: "The opposition role is to help to slow the government down, and I think ultimately better legislation for all the people of this province emerges when the government is forced to take a little longer to pass that legislation." And he's brought in three guillotine motions to shut off debate in less than a week.

I want to quote him again: "What you have with this time allocation motion, with this closure motion, is a government that, every day it comes into this House, gets worse in the way it deals with the democratic process."

Or again: "The minority in this House and perhaps on many occasions the majority of the people in this province, who on occasion disagree with this government, are having their rights run over by this government because it is efficient." Not democratic, but efficient—efficient to silence the people, efficient for this government to shut down debate.

To quote the now government House leader again: "Time and again, the government puts the boots to the opposition in this Legislature, as it has this afternoon with this time allocation motion—more ominous, more sinister every time." So said the government House leader, in the current context of having introduced his third time allocation motion, his third guillotine motion, in less than a week.

But I want to go on. I want to quote the now Attorney General, because this is what he says about closure motions: "I, too, choked when I saw that yet another debate-killing motion was before this Legislature.... They're sometimes called guillotine motions; they're sometimes called closure motions. The technical reference description, so that nobody knows what they are, is time allocation motions." He says he almost choked, yet his own government is using time allocation to shut down debate three times in less than a week.

Or let me quote the Minister of Community and Social Services: "I am not pleased to be speaking to another closure motion today.... The government doesn't want to hear how it has failed, and I will continue to point this out to the government always in the hope that they will finally take the suggestions we have made and apply

them to the people," as her own government uses closure on important public issues for the third time in less than a week.

Or let me quote the member from Essex: "The cutting off of debate—closure, time allocation, whatever you want to call it—really limits the ability of this Legislature to have any effect whatsoever.... The constituents of every riding that is represented in this Legislature, I think, expect their member to be able to stand and voice their opinion and the opinion, therefore, of their constituents. So once again, we are going to stand today, take a legislative day's debate, and at the end of the day we're going to have to accede to the government's wishes that they simply choke off democratic debate." This government has used a closure motion to choke off debate three times in less than a week.

Or let me quote, for example, the now Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, who says, "It seems to me that this is a complete attack on the democratic principles and the parliamentary rules that have been a tradition within the Westminster model." His own government now is bringing a closure motion for the third time in less than a week.

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Or let me quote Mr. Gerretsen, from Kingston and the Islands, again: "What's the meaning of all this? The meaning is quite simply that this government believes it is not important for their House leader to have any discussions with the House leaders on the other side to come up with some meaningful program, some meaningful method, whereby bills can be debated for a certain period of time so that the important bills get four or five days of debate and perhaps some other bills that everybody agrees to can be passed in one day. No, it would rather just ram its way through." And what is the McGuinty government doing? Just ramming it through.

Perhaps I should also quote the chair of the government caucus, Mr. Gravelle, from Thunder Bay—Superior North. He says, "It's just stunning that the way they choose to deal with it at the end of the day is to put time allocation on debate. It's wrong, I think everybody knows it's wrong and I think even the government members themselves know that it's the wrong way to approach it." Then he goes on to say, "This is disgraceful. This is unbelievable," yet his own government is now imposing closure and time allocation for the third time in less than a week.

Or let me quote—he's here tonight—the member for Don Valley East, also now a member of cabinet: "I usually start off my remarks by saying it's a pleasure to speak to something on behalf of the people of Don Valley East, but it really isn't. This is yet another closure motion, a gag order on the Legislature. How could it ever be a pleasure to speak to that, when that's the normal course of action and when this Legislature is shut down for the very purpose it was meant for, which was to discuss important matters?" as his own government, the McGuinty government, imposes closure for the third time in less than a week.

Then I should quote the Premier, because this is what the Premier said: "For a government that promised to be open, this closure action is the height of arrogance, the height of exactly everything you campaigned against and you said you were for." My, my, my. High-minded words. If only the Premier would apply them to his own government. If only the Premier would apply them to his own government's conduct here in the Legislature.

I believe we've done an injustice to the people of Ontario. This government has done an injustice to the people of Ontario, not only by imposing closure on this issue but imposing closure on the LHINs legislation and by bringing a closure motion with respect to the OMERS pension legislation. Three times in less than a week a government with a large majority has sought to stifle democratic debate, has sought to shut down the democratic institution that is supposed to function on behalf of the people, not just on behalf of a majority government.

This is a disservice to the people of Ontario, a disservice to democracy, but most of all it's a disservice to the members of this government who used to stand here and condemn time allocation, who used to stand here and condemn closure, who used to say over and over again themselves that it was disgraceful, that it was undemocratic, that it destroys our democratic institutions, that it undermines free speech. What happened to their brave words? What happened to their desire to stand up for democracy? What happened to their desire to hear full debate and answer? That's a question that I think people all across Ontario are asking with increasing frequency.

I'm not going to debate the issue any further, but I agree with those government members who, only a couple of years ago, said over and over again that shutting down debate, that imposing a guillotine order, that imposing a closure motion, imposing a time allocation motion, was undemocratic. It continues to be undemocratic, and it's especially undemocratic for a McGuinty government that said, oh, in such holier-than-thou tones, that they would never do this, that they were going to bring democracy into full light in Ontario, that they were going to be different, that they were going to be open and transparent. And yet they have imposed a closure motion three times in less than one week.

Mr. Yakubuski: It's my pleasure to join in this debate this evening. Of course, the leader of the third party has articulated very well why we shouldn't be doing what we're doing tonight, because the party in government today—and we don't have to go through chapter and verse of each particular person who sits in the front benches today, be they the government leader or the Minister of Finance, as to what they said about time allocation motions when they were invoked by the previous government. They've used that as an excuse. We have heard time and time again how they were absolutely, in opposition, against time allocation motions, but here today we see it being invoked, if not in actual fact then in principle, for the third time in less than a week.

I'm not going to speak too long on the time allocation side of it, but I am going to talk about the motion itself,

the motion that we were debating with regard to the Minister of Transportation. While the Minister of Transportation has become the subject of this debate, the debate is really not about the Minister of Transportation; the debate is about the Premier of the province of Ontario, Dalton McGuinty.

When we put our names forward to stand for public office, we understand and we recognize clearly that we will live in a fishbowl and that our names and our reputations and everything we do will come under closer scrutiny than anyone else in any other walk of life. If you choose the public life, the elected life, your name and your reputation will come under scrutiny like no other. But we accept that. It is part of the job. You know going in that this is what you can expect as a person who chooses to live the public life. Should you be honoured with an appointment to the executive council, that scrutiny only increases, and the expectation that you will conduct yourself beyond any form of reproach or even the hint of reproach is an accepted part of that job.

What is regrettable today and through this entire process has been the Premier's response to allegations that a member of his executive council—and not only allegations, but an agreement on the part of the minister himself that he has breached the Members' Integrity Act. In fact, for the first time since this act was brought into being, a member of the executive council has been found to be egregiously, recklessly negligent in his breach of the Members' Integrity Act. The Premier's choice has been to ignore that ruling and that finding. Even though the Integrity Commissioner made it clear that he has no power to decide whether a member can sit on the executive council or not—that power rests solely with the Premier of the province of Ontario—the Premier has stonewalled and decided to do nothing about it. That is what is truly regrettable here.

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Going back to some of the things the Premier has said, he spoke about ethics in government and how the rules simply wouldn't be good enough for his government, that they would rise above the rules and set new heights for that bar like no one has ever seen before, because that was the kind of government that Dalton McGuinty promised to bring to Ontario. And he has failed: He has failed in the eyes of the people of the province of Ontario, but what is truly regrettable is that he must be failing in his own eyes, because he has not lived up to the standards he had set for himself. It is very difficult sometimes to live up to the standards set by others, but you have to live up to the standards that you set for yourself, because those are the ones that you will be justly judged by. The Premier has had ample opportunity in this House to choose to do the right thing with regard to this entire situation.

I say, and I continue to say, that this is not about—the Minister of Transportation is the subject. We have mounting mounds of evidence as to why the Premier should ask him to step aside until this thing can be completely cleared up. Send it to committee. Give the

people an honest opportunity to vet this entire situation completely, and then, if it is found that the minister should return to cabinet, so be it. But this has not been dealt with in its entirety, and there are many, many unanswered questions.

There are many issues in the Integrity Commissioner's report, and there is not enough time in the time I am allotted this evening to touch on them. There are many, many inconsistencies, unclarified points and questions as to how that could possibly exist. If a member of the cabinet has said that he has nothing to do with a company, then why does he have a parking spot in the executive lot of that company? That defies logic. If you have nothing to do with the company, they wouldn't waste a parking spot putting your initials on it, and also the initials of your wife on the adjacent spot. So we certainly can't say that that was a shared spot, unlike the cellphone, for example.

The Premier is the question here. I implore him, I ask him—this is not the time to run roughshod over the democratic process in this House. The people of the province of Ontario have the right to see all of the facts completely—unvarnished, completely transparent—and let them make the choice. There is much to be known about this situation, and we are not being given the opportunity, because this government is invoking closure, invoking time allocation, something they preached against. But you know what? They have one rule in opposition, another one in government. That is shameful, and it's regrettable.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? Does any other member wish to speak?

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): It's a pleasure to follow the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, because his anxiety level is quite high, and I respect that. In fact, his time was limited, and so he had a lot to say and little time to say it in.

I was reading the Integrity Commissioner's report, and it is good to respect the offices of the Legislature and to abide by the rules. As we gain experience here, we learn to abide by them. I look at the history here of Jim Wilson earlier, making his declarations, and he did the honourable thing. I think that's really what's being asked here.

It's a matter of Premier McGuinty's reluctance to make a difficult decision. In fact, one of the more difficult decisions is to ask a minister to step aside from cabinet and allow the air to clear and to set a standard for others to follow. That's really what's in question here. I don't question that the Minister of Transportation is well intentioned. His personal plea here the other day brought tears to my eyes, not just his eyes. He bared all, for the most part, and I respect that. It was a humbling gesture for a man who has worked hard to become as successful as he has, becoming successful in really three businesses: the board of education and Chalmers Group as well as being recruited to be a minister of the then-wanting-to-be government—the McGuinty government—by Sandra Pupatello, who was one of large mouthpieces for the government opposition at that time.

Interjections.

Mr. O'Toole: No, no. She spoke very—and Minister Smitherman, who was highly critical, did an excellent job in opposition of railing on the government, railing on Cam Jackson, railing on Minister Wilson, railing on ministers. What we said was setting a standard that needs to be maintained. What's required here—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The member for Durham has the floor, and we should hear what he has to say.

Mr. O'Toole: There is a place for each of us to respect the process, but the process here itself is part of the problem. The Premier's failure to address a standards issue of ethical behaviour is one of the questions that I have. Minister Takhar is a nice fellow; most of the people here are nice fellows, have worked hard and have their own personal stories, each one, which is important and I respect that. But it is a question of the judgment of the Premier. I certainly wouldn't be one to question that judgment, but the Integrity Commissioner did.

I'm going to read from the report, here, by the Honourable Coulter Osborne, Integrity Commissioner. Basically, it's on page 27, section 87, so this isn't some spurious remark. This is what is said:

"As I have said, Mr. Jeyanayangam produced notes that he said he took during the course of the April 29 meeting. I have annexed a typed version of Mr. Jeyanayangam's notes and a handwritten version as appendix 'A' to this report. I am skeptical as to the legitimacy of these notes."

That's very legal, so there are no liability issues going forward. He said, "I am skeptical as to the legitimacy of these notes." What could be clearer? I recall the other day, just a couple of days ago, Minister Takhar responded to a question about the cellphone. They went into this thing: "They're our cellphones"—there were several cellphones that we weren't sure whose they were, the minister's, the ministry's—

Mr. Yakabuski: One and a half—

Mr. O'Toole: One and a half cellphones?

Mr. Yakabuski: One and a half minutes left.

Mr. O'Toole: Okay. I'm wondering this now: There is this time allocation motion. Other ministers have stepped aside; you know, "Let's get on with business." But the Ministry of Transportation's response—I'm the critic there. There's the gridlock issue, the 16-year-old driver's licence issue that you can't deal with, I would say some of the decisions of the 407, environmental assessment, the legal battles ongoing. I wonder if the minister is not seized with this personal issue, whether he shouldn't step aside and allow the Ministry of Transportation to emerge from the gridlock of his issue and get on with running the economy of this province.

With that, I am going to have to step down and allow other members to speak, because there is a litany of issues, not personal, but to summarize, it's about the Premier's leadership and decisiveness on this issue; it's about that.

Interjection.

Mr. O'Toole: The minister is saying over there, "Be careful," because they don't want us to really say anything. I think that's what he's implying, as I understand it.

With that, I'll step down and hope that other members will stand and air their very serious concerns.

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Mr. Vic Dhillon (Brampton West—Mississauga): It's a pleasure to speak on this issue. Mr. Takhar has never shied away from the fact that he was the CEO and president of the Chalmers Group. He's a very smart man. As he said, he's worked very hard to build what he has and that's why the Premier chose him to serve in cabinet. I can't see why the opposition is making a fuss out of really nothing.

The member from Trinity-Spadina mentioned that we're better because we've called for fewer time allocation motions. Yes, we are, and there's no doubt about that. I've gotten very few calls from people in my riding about this issue—actually, I don't think I've had any calls—because people realize and see and agree with the decision the Premier has taken.

Our government is busy doing other things, undoing the mess we were left with. The Tory government cut \$2 billion from public schools, they closed 28 hospitals, they closed 7,100 hospital beds—the list goes on and on and on.

In the Integrity Commissioner's report, there are three issues of contention. The first one: Did Minister Takhar use his position or knowledge gained as a minister to further the interests of his family-owned business? The answer was no. Did Minister Takhar participate in the management of his business? The answer was no.

I don't see why the opposition is going over this again and again and not dealing with the real issues of our government. I think it's about time that we let this pass and get down to further issues that are affecting our province.

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound—Muskoka): It's my pleasure to join in the debate this evening. We're debating the time-allocation motion to end debate on the Integrity Commissioner's report to do with the Minister of Transportation, Mr. Takhar. I had hoped to speak for at least 20 minutes on this, but because of this time allocation motion that is ending the debate, unfortunately I won't be able to cover all the various topics that I would like to. I wanted to give some history, so I had lots of information from the Davis years, for example, when George Kerr resigned from cabinet over a relatively minor situation; and experiences of my own father when he was the Treasurer and there was a leak of budget news that was in no way the Treasurer's responsibility, and how he agonized over the decision to stay in cabinet.

The point I wanted to make is that the standards have changed. We heard from Mr. Wilson earlier about his situation, when he did the right thing and resigned from the executive council. We know of the many ministers in the Harris years who did resign when there was a question at all or an appearance of something being not correct. But here we have an Integrity Commissioner's

report which, if you actually go through it and read it, really questions the credibility of the minister. But I say that this is more about Mr. McGuinty's judgment and his standards for the members of his executive council.

I don't have enough time to go through the report in detail, but I would like to note some of the aspects which really make you question the credibility. For example, we've heard a lot about the meeting that happened at the Chalmers Group on April 29 with Mr. Jeyanayagam, who was his chief financial officer of the company and also—a very cozy arrangement—the chief financial officer for the riding association. It was quite the cozy arrangement, and it's hard to believe the minister wouldn't know that this would be breaking the rules. Supposedly, the meeting was about their daughter's education. In my own case—I have four kids—if we have a meeting to do with our kids' education, we do it around the kitchen table. We don't go to a company and have somebody taking minutes. The minutes really make you wonder about their credibility. In the minutes Mr. Jeyanayagam took, he concluded his notes by referring to Mrs. Takhar making lunch arrangements and the minister going out to make mobile phone calls. That's in the minutes. First of all, if minutes are being taken for a meeting to do with your daughter's education and the trustee of his supposedly blind trust is there, I'm amazed.

We go on. There are so many things you could question: Why did he have a parking spot with his initials on it when he has claimed that he never was involved with the company, yet he was bragging on his election website about his involvement with the company? There are many questions.

All I would say to the general public, because I don't have enough time to go through it in detail as much as I would like to, is to read the Integrity Commissioner's report. When you read the verbatim questions and answers that are described in the report, I think you might be a little skeptical. It did find that the minister was "egregiously reckless" and in fact broke the Members' Integrity Act.

It is only the Premier who can ask the minister to step aside. We're seeing a huge change in the standards in this province, where this minister, who has absolutely broken the rules, is not being asked to step aside.

I'll leave time for the other members. Thank you.

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): I would like to take the next few minutes to join the debate today. The important thing that people need to understand is really, what is a conflict of interest? Much issue has been made about this, and certainly the minister in question has spent a great deal of time in the Legislature saying that things have been explained to him by the Integrity Commissioner and he now understands, and it's time to move on.

But for us as members and for the general public at large, we need to have a better understanding of exactly what it is when we ask, what is a conflict of interest? In answering that question, I've looked at the information provided to us from Professor Michael McDonald of the

University of British Columbia. He defines a conflict of interest as “a situation in which a person, such as a public official, an employee or a professional, has a private or personal interest sufficient to appear to influence the objective exercise of his or her official duties.”

He defines three key elements to this definition:

“First, there is a private or personal interest. Often, this is a financial interest, but it could also be another sort of interest, say, to provide a special advantage to a spouse or child. Taken by themselves, there is nothing wrong with pursuing private or personal interests—for instance, changing jobs for more pay or helping your daughter improve her golf stroke.

“The problem comes when this private interest comes into conflict with the second feature of the definition, an ‘official duty’—quite literally, the duty you have because you have an office or act in an official capacity. As a professional, you take on certain official responsibilities, by which you acquire obligations to clients, employers or others. These obligations are supposed to trump private or personal interests.

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“Third, conflicts of interest interfere with professional responsibilities in a specific way, namely by interfering with objective professional judgment. A major reason clients and employers value professionals is that they expect professionals to be objective and independent. Factors like private and personal interests that either interfere or appear likely to interfere with objectivity are then a matter of legitimate concern to those who rely on professionals—be they clients, employers, professional colleagues or,” in this case, “the general public. So it is also important to avoid apparent and potential as well as actual conflicts of interest. An apparent conflict of interest is one in which a reasonable person would think that the professional’s judgment is likely to be compromised.”

Professor McDonald asks, “How do you determine if you are in a conflict of interest, whether actual, apparent or potential? The key is to determine whether the situation you are in is likely to interfere or appear to interfere with the independent judgment you are supposed to show as a professional in performing your official duties.”

He says, “A good test is the ‘trust test’: Would relevant others trust my judgment if they knew I was in this situation?” The question the House and residents of Ontario should ask is, does the Minister of Transportation meet the trust test? Do his actions meet the test of Professor McDonald’s definition of conflict of interest?

Let’s review how Mr. Takhar’s actions meet the test. What is his private interest? That one is easy. Mr. Takhar was the president and CEO of the Chalmers Group of companies until his election in 2003. His company is in the transportation business, making truck suspensions that he claimed were only exported to the US. We have since learned that Mr. Takhar first claimed he was, “never involved in the business, ever,” and then it was proven that he was the company’s president. His claim that the company only exported to the US was shown to be false, as he sells to Navistar in Chatham.

The Minister of Transportation, as a member of the executive council, had a responsibility to demonstrate that he had severed ties with his former business. His claim that he only went to Chalmers to discuss his daughter’s education remains dubious, and at the very least, he was very sloppy in his demonstration of public adherence to avoiding a conflict of interest.

Mr. Takhar’s private interest in Chalmers is very clear. Equally clear is his necessity of avoiding contact with the company to maintain his position in cabinet. His private interest only matters because his position in cabinet is an official duty. His position requires him to maintain objectivity and to maintain his official responsibilities. He must fulfill a responsibility to all Ontarians and work impartially with stakeholders who must have dealings with the ministry. As Minister of Transportation, he must supervise our transportation and transit systems. He holds a responsibility to make choices on behalf of all Ontarians, to decide impartially what is in the best interests of the people of the province.

The reason a minister must sever his previous relationship with his previous company or companies is so they will not interfere with his objective professional judgment on behalf of the people of Ontario. Businesses, unions, municipalities and individuals depend on an impartial minister to make decisions fairly. They need to be confident that a minister’s decisions are made using a version of the facts unimpaired by any chance of personal bias or gain. Any feelings that a minister’s decision is compromised by conflict of interest brings into question not just a minister’s decision on one issue, but all decisions on every issue.

Professor McDonald identifies trust as the “ethical heart or core of this issue.” Conflicts of interest involve the abuse, actual or potential, of the trust people have in professionals.

This is why we are debating this issue. This is why the Integrity Commissioner made the report he did.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): I had a chance to address, earlier on, the amendment to the motion. I want to end this time allocation motion debate tonight by making an observation. It is incredible to note that only six members of the Ontario Liberal caucus have risen in debate to defend the Minister of Transportation: six members only. The House leader, for example, did speak. The House leader, though, spoke about the motion before the House and did not defend the minister. The member for Brampton Centre, who I respect a great deal, spoke about her respect for the Integrity Commissioner and how the Integrity Commissioner has given her advice, but did not defend the minister nor the Premier.

Of the so-called next realm of the leadership candidates when Dalton McGuinty loses the next election—the Attorney General, the health minister, the education minister, the finance minister, my friend from Hamilton, my friend the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal—not a single one rose to speak to this minister. Six members only: Sadly, one tenth of the Liberal caucus had faith in the minister and only one tenth had faith in the judgment of the Premier. Sad, but telling.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I'm going to speak on this motion that's before us this evening to put it in some context. I listened earlier this evening to the leader of the third party giving a lecture on procedure in the Legislative Assembly. I well remember a debate in the mid-1990s when his party—and he was a member of that cabinet—brought in the most draconian changes to the rules of the Ontario Legislature that I've ever seen at any time and really changed the kind of debate and the devices available to the opposition to deal with issues of public importance in the Legislature.

I well recall a major contentious issue in this Legislature, the social contract, where every contract you could think of in Ontario in the public sector in one motion was simply torn up, like that. The sanctity of the collective agreement, I was lectured by the New Democratic Party, was something that would have to be maintained no matter what, yet with one piece of legislation the New Democratic Party tore up every collective agreement in the public sector in this province. The only reason I raise that issue at this time is because members are wondering, I hear tonight, about the time allocated for debate on bills in committee. So members of the Legislature may wonder how much time was dedicated to public hearings on the social contract, the piece of legislation which abrogated every collective agreement in the public sector in this province. I ask members of the House rhetorically, do you think it was a matter of hours?

Interjections.

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): Weeks. It must have been weeks.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: Weeks, some suggest. Not weeks. Days? Not days. Hours? Not hours. Minutes? Not minutes. Seconds? Not seconds. Zero time was allocated to public hearings.

How much time was then dedicated to third reading? Because now, in this session of the Legislature, we're really talking about third reading. Zero time was dedicated to third reading of the social contract, and that was a major piece of legislation.

So when I hear the leader of the New Democratic Party get up to lecture anybody on time allocation, on time permitted for debate, on time given for public hearings on major contentious issues, I have to laugh when he uses that particular argument. I just remind him of that.

In terms of time allocation where debate was actually severely restricted, nobody but nobody could touch the Conservative Party. They had more time allocation motions, they brought them in at an earlier point in time, and there was very little debate on major contentious issues.

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We have tried—here's where I want to give credit to the opposition. The official opposition House leader and the House leader for the third party have, in my view, conducted themselves honourably and I have been able to work out timetables with them on most legislation. You

will recall that before the Christmas break, we indicated that there should be some considerable time allocated for public hearings, for instance, on major issues when we came back in January, and we made sure that was there. Then we said that even when we come back for a truncated session in the month of February, we would have some additional hearings, some additional time for debate within committee and then within the House.

I think the government has been very reasonable in that regard. I know, as a member of the opposition—I was there a lot of the time—that there is a feeling that you must have even more debate than the government could ever contemplate. I understand that. It's a position the opposition truly believes in and it is something that keeps issues going.

In this particular case, on this motion, there have been three full sessional days of debate and another one tonight, which, in essence, can be utilized either to deal with this motion itself or, as members of the opposition have done, without objection from this side, to talk about the issue of the Integrity Commissioner's report.

I understand those things, but I become very concerned when I see how this came about. I've heard much about the new politics in the province of Ontario. I read an article in the Toronto Star about the new civility and that the leader of the official opposition was the one who brought it in. I've got to say that the new civility has consisted of a camera that is now—I'll put that down, because it's a prop.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I'll give this to the Sergeant at Arms for now.

The reason I mention the camera—

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I say to the member from the Ottawa Valley that the reason I mention it is that when you get into politics and you're looking at the new kind of politics and then you send gumshoes, purported gumshoes and private detectives, which your own party people might be, to follow members of the Legislature to take pictures of them, I'll tell you, you're going down a slippery, slippery slope. One could only imagine what one would have found in the past following people with cameras. One wonders what you could find at any time. I would never advocate that. I think it's a major mistake for political parties to go down that path of following members of the Legislature with cameras to take pictures and then, of course, to give the pictures to one of the newspapers.

I'm one who believes that sin is shared. One of my favourite quotes from the Bible is John 8:7, which says, in essence, "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone." Many of us in the Legislature should follow that particular part of the Bible very carefully.

I have a memory of some of the things that have happened in this House in the past. I think it's a very dangerous step in the new politics to have members of the staff of the official opposition, or any party, for that matter, sneaking around behind members of the Legis-

lature taking photographs of them and then giving them to newspapers and making a fuss about them. That's a very dangerous path to go down and I would never advocate that, even though, as I say, I'm not one who says there is any party in the House that is without sin in these matters.

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: The member is interjecting now, obviously over the objections of his leader, who said he didn't believe in interjections in the House.

But I say to the member that this is a very difficult path to go down. I understand the opposition. Listen, I've been in the House long enough to watch, and I understand, particularly those members who have been directly affected by calls from the opposition to resign. I understand that very much. I've always felt for those people when that happened, quite honestly. Not that this matters one way or the other, but I've never asked for a member's resignation in this House, ever, and I've decided I would not follow certain questioning. But that happens in the House, and I don't detract from that. Members of the opposition have to ask those questions. There's no particular virtue in my taking that stance, because it is necessary, from time to time, for the opposition to ask very tough questions. But I think we have to be very, very careful when we start following people around with cameras, and I hope that doesn't happen much in the future.

This is a useful exercise. The Integrity Commissioner has carefully assessed a circumstance, he has provided recommendations to this House, and the recommendations are contained in the motion before the House, the motion that will eventually be voted upon. I respect the Integrity Commissioner; I think he's a top-notch individual. I listen carefully when he speaks, and I listen with my mind when he actually writes a report for members of the Legislature. We can all draw from that report what we will. The opposition, naturally, is going to draw the worst possible scenario; governments tend not to draw that same scenario. I understand that.

We have had debate in the House. A government could say this is a waste of time and end debate after one day. We didn't think that was fair, and we tried to say to the opposition, "How long would you take on this?" They indicated that the debate would go on indefinitely. That's their prerogative. I'm not critical of the opposition for saying that. Again, that is their responsibility, that is their obligation. If they don't want to tell us how long they think the debate will go on, that's fair ball too. There's nothing wrong with that, and the public should know that, when we're dealing with three parties.

But there have been three full days and another evening to debate this issue. The opposition has put forward its case as forcefully and as comprehensively and as vehemently as it determines is necessary, and the government has put forward its particular view on this, both in question period, where both opposition leaders and parties have directed questions to the Premier and to others, and answers have been provided that may not be

satisfactory for the opposition. I understand that as well. I was in opposition. I can tell you that in opposition I seldom found the answers given by the government of the day to be satisfactory, but so be it. Somebody else can arbitrate on that.

It has been an interesting experience. I'm glad that the members of the assembly have had a chance to air their views. That's appropriate on an issue of this kind. It is called for that within 30 days the Legislature is to respond to a report from the commissioner, and the Legislature has decided to do that. The response—it depends what side of the House you're on and what interpretation you have, and I respect all of those views. I may disagree with them, but I respect all of the views that are presented in this House.

When you remember what the motion actually says—the motion accepts the report of the Integrity Commissioner.

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: My colleague asked, "How will the opposition vote?" I can't presume that. I have a hope that they would confirm what the commissioner has said, but the opposition is under no obligation to vote in any particular way on this, and they will make their own judgment.

These are difficult times. I look at the leader of the official opposition in this circumstance, because I think he understands it, and perhaps some of the others on the government benches who come from the business field. We have to be very cautious that we don't completely discourage people from the business field from becoming involved in politics. I know that is not an excuse for any particular behaviour that takes place at any particular time. I'm not from the business field, but I respect people who come from all fields to this Legislature. I've worried for a number of years in politics that, with the rules and regulations we have—I guess they're necessary—are we discouraging people from the business field from coming into politics? And once in politics, are we discouraging them from leaving?

Mr. Marchese: In any field.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: My friend from the NDP is right in saying that that can be said of many people. It can be discouraging from time to time. I don't want to dwell on this unduly and be unfair, but when we start taking pictures of members of the Legislature as they're about their private business, about wherever they happen to be going, boy, that makes people start to say, "Do I really want to get into a game where they're taking pictures of me, where they have got their staff out taking pictures?" I don't know who they're hiring to do it; I presume it's staff.

I worry about that. I don't think it's as hard to—although it's difficult for some, it's easier to attract people who don't come from the business field. The people from the business field come from a different milieu, and they have to make some tough decisions from time to time in the House. My friend the Leader of the Opposition may think this is unfair, but the Premier or others,

in answering questions from him, will quote his experience in the private sector. It is a different circumstance that one faces in the private sector; I understand that. The Leader of the Opposition probably considers that unfair when the answer comes back in that way, but I go back to the general theme of, what are we doing to people from the private sector—in businesses particularly—when we are very, very onerous on them and where it's difficult for them to make that jump from business into government? That excuses no particular behaviour of any kind. I simply ask that question rhetorically.

I think the debate has been useful for the House. I know that governments don't like these kinds of debates, no matter who they are. I think it has been useful to canvass the issues, and I think that we have provided at least three days of actual debate on the motion, and another night where I noticed my friend from the NDP—Rosario; I can call him that because he's a good friend of mine—utilized it to talk about the issue itself, as opposed to time allocation. I have no objection to that. In fact, often, on that last day of debate on time allocation, we utilize it for that purpose. So it really means you have four full days on it.

I congratulate members on dealing with issues of this kind. They're never easy for governments and they're never easy for the House. I hope that when we leave this session, we can leave our recriminations behind, if not the conclusions that we reach.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? Is there any other member who wishes to speak?

If not, Mr. Caplan has moved government notice of motion 76. Is it the pleasure of House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2053 to 2103.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour will stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Balkissoon, Bas	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Rinaldi, Lou
Bountrogianni, Marie	Levac, Dave	Ruprecht, Tony
Bradley, James J.	Marsales, Judy	Sandals, Liz
Caplan, David	Matthews, Deborah	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	McMeekin, Ted	Smitherman, George
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Van Bommel, Maria
Dhillon, Vic	Milloy, John	Wilkinson, John
Di Cocco, Caroline	Peters, Steve	Wong, Tony C.
Duguid, Brad	Qaadri, Shafiq	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Racco, Mario G.	Zimmer, David
Jeffrey, Linda	Ramal, Khalil	

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will stand one at a time and be recognized by the clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tory, John
Barrett, Toby	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Chudleigh, Ted	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John
Hudak, Tim	O'Toole, John	
Marchese, Rosario	Scott, Laurie	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 32; the nays are 13.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Is the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House is adjourned until 10 of the clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 2105.

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. Brown

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller

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Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Dhillon, Vic (L)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
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Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Milloy, John (L)
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
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Guelph-Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)	Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)

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Ottawa–Orléans	McNeely, Phil (L)	Toronto Centre–Rosedale / Toronto-Centre–Rosedale	Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Ottawa–Vanier	Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (L) Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones	Trinity–Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Vaughan–King–Aurora	Sorbara, Greg (L)
Parkdale–High Park	Kennedy, Hon. / L'hon. Gerard (L) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Waterloo–Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Parry Sound–Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Willowdale	Zimmer, David (L)
Perth–Middlesex	Wilkinson, John (L)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Peterborough	Leal, Jeff (L)	Windsor–St. Clair	Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L) Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre des Finances, président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge	Arthurs, Wayne (L)	York Centre / York-Centre	Kwinter, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (L) Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Prince Edward–Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	York North / York-Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Yakubuski, John (PC)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	Cordiano, Hon. / L'hon. Joseph (L) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Samia–Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	York West / York-Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
Sault Ste. Marie	Oraziotti, David (L)	Nepean–Carleton	Vacant
Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Duguid, Brad (L)	Toronto–Danforth	Vacant
Scarborough East / Scarborough-Est	Chambers, Hon. / L'hon. Mary Anne V. (L) Minister of Children and Youth Services / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse	Whitby–Ajax	Vacant
Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)		
Scarborough–Agincourt	Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (L) Minister of Government Services / ministre des Services gouvernementaux		
Scarborough–Rouge River	Balkissoon, Bas (L)		
Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)		
Simcoe–Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
St. Catharines	Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L) Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader / ministre du Tourisme, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées, leader parlementaire du gouvernement		
St. Paul's	Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L) Attorney General / procureur général		
Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)		

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Wayne Arthurs, Caroline Di Cocco,
Garfield Dunlop, Andrea Horwath,
Cameron Jackson, Kuldip Kular, Phil McNeely
John Milloy, Jim Wilson
Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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Laurie Scott, Monique M. Smith,
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